

# FRONTIER DIARIES

## FULL MOON AT MIRANSHAH

*Searching history unarmed in North Waziristan, May – December 2012*

### Introduction

It was in April 2012 that I received a call from my old friend Colonel Khalid Shahbaz , his calls are not unexpected because for last over two decades I am receiving his calls almost daily, nothing official just discussing cricket and sports. For a change he informed me that one of his regiment officer is commanding Tochi Scouts in North Waziristan Agency and is looking for someone to write the history of his corps; am I willing?. Without giving any second thought I agreed.. I had never landed in Miranshah or for that matter in North Waziristan Agency in my 25 years of military career, had flown over it couple of times. Read about it, fascinated and dreamed of travelling through it. In 1996 bought a Russian jeep and a Kalashnikov for the purpose, one landed me in trouble with my wife and another with my commanding officer. Thus when I was offered a chance to write the history of Tochi Scouts I was thrilled. I had met Commandant Colonel Wajahat Hamdani only once before for short duration, he is unit officer of my course mate and dear friend Colonel Khalid Shahbaz, who for once did talk about something productive other than cricket in these twenty fivers of friendship; in putting me through or rather us together for this venture.

I contacted Wajahat to get an idea how to reach Miranshah there was no safe way to reach. No bus, train or private car. When I was a subaltern then a Hiace wagon had regular service between Sargodha and Miranshah but now time has elapsed and there was no way other than to reach Bannu where Tochi Scouts had a rear headquarters or Serai. From Bannu there is a regular traffic plying to and fro Miranshah and even beyond but for military there is a convoy which moves only once a week amidst curfew. I was bent upon adventure yet I never even for once contemplated going in a civilian transport; such is the terror. Amidst this procrastination I arrived in Rawalpindi on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2012 and next day I had an offer from another old friend Colonel Sardar Sajjad to drive with him to Peshawar; I agreed. We

reached Peshawar at 2300 hours on 6<sup>th</sup> May with a plan to catch an army aviation helicopter flying to Miranshah. Unknown to both of us a far reaching event had taken place there on the same day. I stayed for next six months at MiranShah and this is what this book is all about.

I travelled around with Scouts to Razmak, Boya, GhulamKhan, Bangidar, Massuzai to name few otherwise I went deep into archives, observed the scouts, felt the war going on , when almost daily there was a duel of fire between the Scouts and Taliban. The ever present noise of Drone flying overhead keeps reminding of the time when all around it seems to be beginning of Bronze Era. I wrote two accounts, one official and other unofficial ; I have infused both because one is only one side of picture. It reflects the history of North Waziristan itself and more pertinent to present day observers of international affairs, history and political science and all these invariably revolves around military system. What about individual and personal feelings going on and around the insurgency and terrorism. How does group behaves, how they celebrate events and so on.

### **North Waziristan Agency**

North Waziristan Agency (NWA) have an area of 4,707 square kilometers with a population of 3,61,246 (1998 census) thus an annual growth rate of 2.46%. There were 192,432 males and 168,814 females in the agency, literacy rate being 13% among males and 0.5% among females. Population density was 77 persons per square kilometers only South Waziristan Agency had a lower density rate then NWA among the seven agencies (SWA have an area of 6,620 square kilometers with a population of 429,841).<sup>1</sup> The Uthmanzai Wazir still formed 59% of population, Daur 39% with Mahsud forming the remainder. There were 73000 Afghan refugees still living in the agency. Ibrahim Khel, Wali Khel and Mamit Khel were the three major Wazir Tribes with sub clans which included Madda Khel, Manzar Khel, Tori Khel and Macha Khel of Ibrahim clan, Bakka Khel, Jani Khel, and Kabul Khel being part of Wali Khel clan, Hassan Khel, Khaddar Khel, Bora Khel and Wuzzi Khel were integral part of Mamit Khel; all in all there are 42 sub clans of Uthmanzai Wazir in NWA.

Daur tribe composed of four main clans namely Dangar Khel Sayyids, Ozhi Khel Sayyids, Malizad and Tappizad. The last two are most populous and important. Malizad alone has 67 subclans. There was not much of change in the areas of their occupation, they were living between Tanghrai Tangi near Tal on Tochi to halfway between Boya and Datta Khel; on the lower end of Tochi Valley they are known as Lower Daurs and occupy the area from Shinkai Defile to Tanghrai Tangi. In upper Daur area (Malizad) their main clans are at Degan, Malakh, Boya, Hamzoni, Darpa Khel and at MiranShah where as in lower Daur they are at Idak, Tappi, Khaddi, Hurmaz, Mausaki, Hassu Khel and Haider Khel. Major difference between the Daurs and Wazir remain in the fact that Daur do not migrate.

**7<sup>th</sup> May 2012, Day One. Miranshah.1530 hours local.**

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<sup>1</sup> 103 Infantry Brigade analysis of the FATA, 2011.

I arrived at Miranshah from Peshawar in a Mi-17 helicopter courtesy Colonel Sardar Sajjad, luckily the General Officer Commanding {GOC} Major General Ali Abbas who is commanding the deployed 7 Division happens to be my course mate and a good friend thus I was able to get the picture of the area from horse's mouth. Unfortunately after almost a month of peace today the rebels struck hard at the army convoy killing over dozen and wounding another forty apart from taking away few prisoners majority of the soldiers are from 36 Baloch and few from 20 Baloch regiments. Ali put me wise on the subject as to why a handful of bandits have been able to resist the onslaught of a regular infantry division, neither Ali will admit it and nor will any other army officer that these rebels have attained a notion of victory.

Ali Abbas 's view point is that he does not have enough force, his troops are deployed but Ali as he is candidly admitted that so far the army has been beaten in learning the ropes of the trick in frontier warfare. *'when I was commanding a brigade in the south Waziristan my first challenge in 2007 was to convince the troops that the war we are fighting is legitimate ... I would address the troops durbar and urge them to speak out their mind because only then I could give them the logics to change their heart, second task was to train them in fighting this unconventional warfare which it seems that they have still lot to learn'.*

In the afternoon I had a walk in the mess and found a library although it is not that rich in terms of books yet it is in these far flung remote areas especially among Scouts libraries that one comes across some rich manuscripts and same was the case here. I also went to Museum and one has to appreciate the spirit because it is one of the best kept museum in Pakistan especially when one keeps in mind the environment, needless to say the female mannequins wearing local dress depicting the cultural heritage of the area are the only female sex symbols in the area and I have to admit that it does create sensations. The long walk on the main mall is mind refreshing the variety of roses planted here and all in their bloom is a treat for the eyes and soul and the traditional warning boards planted in the furrows warning the soldiers not to step on these rose buds have typical Scouts sense of humour embalmed in it.

Dinner in the mess all alone, the dining hall is square and big but not huge with Corps and national flags on front wall a piano in working condition two glass cupboards with mess silver and half a dozen heads of Urial and deer mounted on the dinning hall walls along with equal number of antique and not so antique weapons mainly machine guns forms part of dinning hall décor. Mess has innumerable rooms or at least it seems like this all having varying décor but weapons and silver remains the central theme. It is after a long time that one comes across a mess so rich in military décor. A scrap book presented in 1937 by two Scouts officers have wealth of old pictures my eyes caught the picture of an Auster aircraft at Miranshah strip in 1946 there is a letter of the pilot as well who visited the place in 1988 for nostalgic reasons.

**2130 hours.** Outside the thunder of clouds and that of explosives are intermingling, all day there has been constant firing between the Taliban's and the Tochi Scouts. The fort is strong and almost a whole wing is entrusted with its inner cordon protection yet the Taliban's kept on firing from the mud built houses that forms the Miranshah bazaar. A rocket exploded within the fort area while I was having a cup of tea with the quartermaster in his office but it seems routine affair, soon he told me after listening to the telephone call that Sepoy Sahibzad Bhittani has died in this explosion and then in the same tone in which he ordered cigarettes for me he also called the subedar of Bhittani Qaum. I was just wondering

whether I should walk back to the mess amidst this fire or just keep on sitting in this office. Thought of Lawrence and was convinced that he must have got the same reception in 1921.

Another whistling sound of a rocket and a counter fire from the scouts but life within the mess is as normal as one can imagine. When I came from the strip on a jeep in this fort I heard the noise of gun fire and thought that scouts are carrying out range practice but my driver corrected me by stating it is actual fire. I have no hesitation in admitting that in my whole twenty years of military service I have not seen so much hostile fire which I encountered today and it is still going on. At night I had the nightmare of hallucinating a Waziri entering my suite armed with a dagger,

### **8<sup>th</sup> May 2012, Day two.**

A peaceful morning so far only the chirping of the birds, I had a joint so as to concentrate on the task. The room reminds me of many episodes which must have taken here in the past. Waiting for bed tea.

I had a conversation with the commandant on the layout and general contents of the book. Later I met Lt Col Tariq and gathered some interesting data for instance he highlighted that majority of the soldiers are without any child and this struck him as strange, later on when he interviewed the soldiers he inquired them on this and it was the first time that any one has talked to them on this issue, another reason which is given for this lack of children among the scouts is attributed to the fact that most of them are not even aware of how to perform sex and they preferred anal sex with their wives, it seems strange but it is authentic and narrated by a lady doctor who inspected the wife of one of the soldier. Another thing which was discussed by Tariq was the level of hospitality among the troops. One of the wing havildar major which is a coveted appointment after six months requested him for relinquishment, it was revealed that the WHM was spending a considerable amount of money on hospitality of troops who were coming or going to the posts apart from share in farewell gifts for his colleagues, Tariq as a solutions started giving a fixed amount to all the appointments for entertainment but it was cordially turned down.

I met the Corps Subedar Major Zulfiqar at his office a good natured person with a typical scout sense of humour which becomes obvious after few minutes of observation. He showed me a bullet cartridge which was collected from the post in yesterday firing, it was fired from the Cobra and SM was furious over this he also resented the fact that yesterday not a single rocket was fired by the Cobras. He updated me on the yesterday's episode and said that he was stopped from retaliating against the Taliban's by the senior officer for the fear of collateral damage, ' sahib we also have wife and children and if these bastards are going to show no respect for them why should we do so... I ordered the troops yesterday to fire on the mosque as well as the Taliban's were using it as a strong point'. I talked about the footwear of Scouts after having a look at his brown chappal; he very proudly told me that this chappal is made in his native hometown of Parachinar.

The uniform of Scouts is under transition from militia kameez shalwar to trouser and shirt along with shoes almost every one whom I have met is not happy with this change. Colonel Wajahat highlighted that kameez shalwar is something which is acceptable to the locals and the whole spirit of Scouts revolved around wearing native dress and with this change the Scouts are bound to loose their face among the natives after all the western dress is a symbol of oppression to the natives. I also had a look at the brown belt of the uniform but found it below expectation in terms of quality of leather. Tochi Scouts

have six wings and each wing has its own colour for instance No. 4 Wing has pink colour flag. Havildar Shah Wazir became my guide and took me for a walk in the fort; we started with the nearest wall behind the offices and the check post, Mian told me and also showed the spot where rockets landed yesterday, one had exploded as it hits the tree trunk and other when it hit the wall. I saw Miranshah from the wedge of the post a scene typical of frontier almost a dozen trucks were standing parked and there was no movement at all, along the road are few double storeyed houses which also act as kind of hotels and my guide told me that fire normally comes from these high buildings although few have been demolished. The fear of unknown that the bullet may come from any direction at any time is quite sensational. Scouts have raised the banks of the road so as to create a kind of obstruction for the snipers. I also had a look at the observation post and the wall graffiti, there was no mention of sweet hearts as is common in Siachen posts neither any poetry of romance rather few advisory and morality related issues were chalked like stealing is bad.

Next we walked towards the clerks office area where recruitment of sweepers was under process, I am not sure but I will check up tomorrow as to from where all these Christians have come for recruitment in Scouts. Four 25 pounder guns were locked in four rooms, saw soldiers living barracks, a long barrack with tubular cots placed next to wall, black steel trunks with names written in bold white cooking utensils as in regular army. Soldiers do tend to have the passion of cooking food themselves partially by adding something spicy to already cooked food. Chakoor is a favourite pet of soldiers especially of Scouts I noticed no less than four cages having the bird inside. Canteen was our next stop it is not very rich but has almost everything less than weapons and hashish for sale. Later we both walked outside the fort towards the soldiers family area where kids were playing with football, a college almost complete was also my focus of attention but my guide told me that it has not started teaching.

In the evening I had tea with commandant at his residence and came to know that this was old Air Force Mess of RPAF but what was more amazing was the fact that almost fifty civilians daily come for work from Miranshah. Weather was again becoming cloudy, Colonel Wajahat narrated that he came in last July and there were rain during the entire month of August last year.

This place is strange because there is a war going on yet life is as normal as it can be there is tennis in the evening. Load shedding is there but Scouts have their own generators as well.

On a map of having scale one to a million the easting's from 66 degrees onwards on observes brown colour as predominant the northing's corresponding to it that is 32 degrees northwards up till 34 degree the terrain is barren and void of any major water reservoirs two water reservoirs namely Ab e Istada & Dasht Nawar are eye catching because of blue colour, major towns are Ghazna, Gardez & Matun even Kabul is enclosed in the area. The Durand Line which is mark in red, the eastern side of it is has more green colour and finally the Indus is major blue colour showing the water life line thus it is natural to assume that all the population was drawn magnetically towards the Indus. Durand line does not follow any natural riparian division rather it follows the crest line of the mountains and that too not in a straight line but over the passes that allows the movement from east towards the Indus.

Area between the Kurram River or the Peiwar Kotal Pass down south till Gomal Pass or Gomal River is the country of Waziris, it is in terms of historical contest, in terms of administrative boundary the area is divided into valleys thus Valley adjacent to Peiwar Kotal is termed as Kurram Valley and inhabited by tribes other than the Waziris.

The over all topography of the area is pleasant and seems lively when compared to the Baluchistan and extreme northern Hindukush. The rivers are the source of life but they seem to have dried out in the era of Aryan migration and one cannot rule out that the major reason and cause of migration was this dearth of water. For last five hundred years these river beds occasionally come to life due to heavy snow fall or rain which causes the small innumerable riverine and streams to gush down the mountains and join the major rivers thus the population is based around these beds of fertile land, over all the area is rocky but not menacing in nature. Mountains are high yet none is higher than 12000 feet. The layout of ground between Tochi River and Gomal is most pleasant with green pastures and lively valleys dotted with fruit trees and wildlife however the area over all cannot sustain the inhabitants purely on its own produce. The major crop is maize and wheat, rice is not produced in the area. Fruits are in abundance especially the apples, grapes, walnut, pomegranate and watermelon. Weather is tolerable both in winter and summer however the cold weather does force temporary migration of nomadic peoples known as powindahs who at the start of winter season migrate from the highland west of Durand Line towards the Indus Valley and then return to their lands in summer.

### **Tribes of Tochi Scouts**

#### **Afridi.**

There are ten platoons of Afridis, they have eight sub clans. Namely Koki Khel, Adam Khel, Aka Khel, Qambar Khel, Malik Din Khel, Qamar Khel, Zakha Khel and Sipahya. Out of these, seven clans live in Khyber Agency less Adam Khel. Subedar Muhammad Hayat Adam Khel Afridi is the Quam Commander since April 2012.

#### **Bangash.**

Six platoons they are mixed in terms of Shia and Sunni faith adherent. Kohat, Hangu is their abode. They all belong to settled areas. Subedar Major Ryat Khan Sur Gul Bangash is the Quam Commander.

#### **Bhittani.**

Eight platoons, they were inducted in 2003. Initially two platoons were inducted in No.5 wing later one more platoon was inducted then two more in same wing and lately another two have been inducted in No.6 Wing. Bhittanis inhabit the area of Lakki and Tank (Dera Ismail Khan).

#### **Khattak.**

Thirteen platoons, they inhabit Karak, Kohat and surrounding areas. Bhangi Khel, Senni Khel, Saggri, Akora and Barak are sub clans of Khattaks. Barak lives in Karak District, Bhangi Khel resides in Kohat and Mianwali District. Saggri in Jhand Tehsil (Attock District) Senni in Kohat & Gumbat, Akora Khattak in Nizampur, Nowshera and Attock Districts.

#### **Mohmand.**

Five platoons. Mohmand have two major clans Alimzai and Tarakzai. Alimzai have six sub clans namely Darpa Khel, Bhabi Khel, Dawat Khel, Rarra Khel, Katar Khel, Yousaf Khel; they all reside in Ghandara Agency. Other clan Tarakzai lives in Michni, Swabi and Tangi Prang {Shabqadar area}.

#### **Marwat.**

Three platoons, they were inducted in 1993.

**Orakzai.**

Five platoons. They live in Kurram Valley, adjacent Tirah Valley. Orakzai Agency itself was formed in 1973, a small patch of Orakzai Agency is adjacent to Thal on Kurram. There are four major clans in terms of population namely Ali Khel, Mishti, Shaikhan and Maula Khel. Overall there are eighteen sub clans from which Tochi Scouts are recruited out of them only two clan follows Shia faith {Baramad Khel & Manni Khel}. The clans in addition to name above are Feroze Khel, Akhel, Rabpa Khel, Mamazai, Bezoi Khel, Khuidad Khel, Utman Khel, Daulat Zai, Alisher Zai, Massuzai.

**Swati.**

Two platoons, inducted in 2007 from Thal Scouts as part of No.6 Wing. There are six clans of Swati in Tochi Scouts. Bismillah Khel, Tora Khel, Fazal Khel, Umra Khel, Paggra Khel, Qamar Khel and Khan Khel. They all live in District Manshehra. People of Haripur also enroll in the vacancy of Swati. Subedar Laiq Muhammad Bismillah Khel Swati is the Qaum Commander (he is the first Qaum Commander) he joined Tochi Scouts in 2007.

**Turi.**

Six platoons they all belong to Kurram Agency, all Shias. They have Daparzai, Alizai and Bangash (Turi Bangash), Doprzai, Ghunday Khel, Mastu Khel, Hamza Khel, Badda Khel clans, all inhabit Parachinar area. In other Frontier Corps units Badda Khel are recruited as separate tribe but in Tochi Scouts they are part of Turi. They migrated from Turkestan. Presently Subedar Noor Hussain Daparzai is the Qaum Commander. He joined Tochi Scouts in 1989.

**Yousafzai.**

Seven platoons, Mardan, Swat is their recruiting ground.

**Wazir.**

There are seven platoons of Wazirs in the Tochi Scouts, they belong to the settled areas the two sub clans of Wazirs are Jani Khel and Hati Khel. They are mixed platoons, which means that no single clan have a platoon of their own. Jani Khel lives in area astride Bannu where as Hati Khel are almost in south of Tochi Valley. In the picture down below it is only Wazir who is carrying a weapon and a flower.

**9<sup>th</sup> May2012, Day Three, 0930 hours**

Waiting for the first cup of tea birds are singing but early in the morning there was familiar streaking and shrieking noise of rockets falling close by that is how I awoke up. There is nothing that can be done the only safety is to slip under the bed but somehow the other the mind does not accept this kind of logical solution. The other constant and regular noise is the grass cutting mower. My tea is here.

I spent better half of the day in the museum, the museum in charge is havildar Saeed an Afridi from Khyber Agency briefed me about the general life pattern, he is in Tochi Scouts for last seventeen years. He underwent nine months of training and after that much of his service has been spent on the basketball court. I found three old registers in the lower drawers of the table including an visitors book dated 1953 and find was the fact that Major Zia ul Haq have served here in Tochi Scouts he later became army chief and President of Pakistan ; his another entry was in 1962 when as a commandant of Chitral Scouts he came to attend the Frontier Corps Week. There are other notable dignitaries including the signature of King Saud. I also found three old albums among the heap of rubble, it is amazing how one comes across such rare documents when they are least expected. A visit to the quarter guard to take the pictures and to have a handshake with the smart soldiers, the guard commander at times do fall in the guard and present me with salute I do feel embarrass because I am not authorized such salutes any more.

On my way to the office area I stopped at the G Office and inquired about the availability of the data and documents the civilian superintendent was courteous but talkative and bit pessimistic he however true to Pathan hospitality offered me juice and I recalled the yesterday's narration of how a BHM was willing to leave the appointment because of heavy hospitality expenditures thus I declined still they bought a liter bottle of 7- UP. As I was sitting there Havildar Shah also came in carrying maps and in a bit of hurry as he had to made a sketch.

I had a cup of tea with Lt Col Tariq and Lt Col Rab Nawaz both were wearing the trouser uniform today. Tariq got busy in the case of a subedar who wants a medical board out, Tariq rang the concerned psychiatrist and talked to him highlighting that they themselves had declared the concerned subedar unfit but now they are not signing the papers. After he hang up he updated me on the affair that concern subedar as per psychiatrist is normal but intentionally wants a board out as it will enhance his pension package and was willing to offer a lap top to the doctor for this favour but doctor was not willing to give extra benefits to a person not deserving.

**1300 hours.** With Havildar Shah I went to the Iftikhar Piquet which is at the eastern corner of the fort overlooking the Miranshah bazar. The piquet by construction seems old probably constructed after the partition it is in three layers . The ground floor is the sleeping area and tubular beds were there with colourful red quilt on one of the bed. Iron stair case takes you to the second floor where two soldiers were on duty, one light machine gun was placed on fixed line the top also has another LMG on fixed line with two more soldiers on duty all wearing trouser and shirt along with suede colour desert shoes.

My first inquiry was about the dress and feedback was not in favour of it the guard commander an Afridi highlighted the fact that in kameez shalwar it was easy to attend the call of nature but with this



western dress it is difficult , the soldier highlighted that it was far more convenient to offer prayers with chappals than with shoes and both view points are valid. Almost all soldiers offer their prayers and it took just seconds to take off chappals where as it takes minutes in removing and again putting on the shoes further more the pack shoes cause foot diseases and requires a support for wearing and taking off. I am not in favour of this uniform change another key factor is the absence of belt on the uniform thus carrying of water bottle and even a weapon on body is cumbersome. The day I came on a helicopter there were six officers and only one was carrying weapon wrapped around his thigh and none was carrying water bottle that includes the three soldiers on board as well and it is all due to the absence of belt.

**Miranshah** as I observed from the piquet is just like any other frontier town houses built of concrete and mud, narrow and high with water tanks on top of the roof mostly in blue colour and some have wrapped them to keep the heat away. A road passes through it on the one side of the road is all Tochi Scouts area and on the other side is the commercial hub. Rows of trucks were parked and regular movement was going on with a truck moving after every half an hour, cars are mostly white in colour Toyota hatch back there is one Suzuki FX also motorcycles are also there but not many. In the rear of the fort boundary wall is an open area which was previously used as the parade ground of Tochi Scouts and behind it the stadium built by the political agent but now deserted and occupied by the troops of Tochi Scouts which have their post there I am tempted to go there but pend it till tomorrow . A Steiner binocular and night vision goggles are also available , I scanned the town with the help of binocular there are two high water tanks, a hospital which is obvious because of high trees , Havildar Shah informed me that previously they used to provide the ration to the hospital but no more. All around the fort but especially in this quadrant there are anti personal mines but no trip flares, I also noticed the scarcity of barbed wire. My eyes immediately caught the red shirt of a woman sitting with her children one of which was wearing a parrot coloured clothes and clothing was western. It is a scrap store and the owner clad in white kameez shalwar along with black waist coat and a pugree was walking leisurely, I observed two more men also wearing white dress a woman clad in black was sitting next to a wall waiting for the transport, a man relieving himself against the wall. The building that catches your sight is the Hotel Khushboo from the binocular I could see the telephone number of the hotel as well, a little bit of concentration and I could pick a man wearing white dress and sitting in the balcony. The wall of the hotel had the advertisement of Pepsi and 7 UP painted, the wall of this hotel and almost all the other buildings have the familiar gun firing scars. It was prayer time and the small mosque was visible where majority of the faithful were children. The three shops on the main road all deals in auto decoration and fourth one deals with tyres.

I wonder is there someone watching me? There must be a sniper sitting some where and as I was scanning the town he must be doing the same. I could not dare to ask for a helmet or a body armour it would have been below the acceptance level of Scouts. I remained at the piquet for an hour and then moved down with Shah. Later we went to see the information room of the Tochi Scouts I am impressed with the facilities and lay out, have not seen a pool table in information room saw one today, good selection of books and magazines especially the weekly Akhbar e Jahan with its female centre fold seems to be an attractive issue. We also walk to the cobbler shop and through out this I found Shah to be an excellent company. The cobbler showed his inability to make a chappal for me as he has no leather right now but hopefully he will get the leather in next convoy coming from Bannu. Also went to see the cook houses, every wing has separate cook house.

**1845 hours.** I just sat outside and enjoyed the weather which is cloudy and chances of thunder and rain are pretty high. Captain Shoaib the Aide De Camp of Major General Ali Abbas came to inquire if I am comfortable. We talked about so many trifling affairs and as I was telling him that how the promotion of Ali Abbas is so motivating for the rest of the army. Ali in academy was clean shaved but after few years of service he started keeping a beard which kept on growing in size. By 2001 when he was commanding officer of the 4 Baloch Regiment which was the president guard battalion also, he still kept his beard and one day President Musharraf while shaking hands with him moved forward and then turned back and asked ‘ what you said?’ and Ali’s reply was ‘ Sir I am commanding officer of your guard battalion’. In those days many of the even committed officers trimmed their beards but Ali was exception and he kept on rising in military career and finally he became a Major General. At this I heard Ali’s voice and when I looked back he was in the room next to mine doing weight lifting. Later we both had a cup of tea and remembered Captain Javed our course mate and Ali’s best friend and soul mate.

**1945 Hours.** Havildar Shah arrived with the famous Bannu Niswar, I had requested him in the morning because I was curious as to what type of intoxication if at all the troops take and traditionally the Pathans take niswar so I am going to try that to get a feeling of local culture, the other cultural thing is hashish but I am bit reluctant in asking it but I think I should do it to get an insight into the native mind set. Shah told me about his family he has six children and he sends his pay to his father who runs the house his parents are alive. He is about to retire in another a year thus he was bit anxious as to what he will do next. I gave him my example that even after four years of retirement I am still trying to cope up with the life. We talked of military life and found that we both feel more comfortable in regimental life rather than sitting in the house with family. Shah confessed that after ten days of leave in his hometown he feels home sick for the Scouts and I nodded . Shah also highlighted that in his area the Talibans have strong hold and it is some times very frustrating for him when they talk evil of Frontier Constabulary ‘I do not know what is right or wrong but I cannot bear any bad word about my corps’. We both sat and enjoyed the rain drops.

**2015 Hours.** I met Lieutenant Colonel Suleman in the veranda of the mess and after few words about the weather and introduction {he is commanding officer of 25 Cavalry} he has been a squadron commander during operations in Swat Valley and now his regiment is deployed over 400 Kilometres of area. One tank at so and so post , two tanks there, four tanks at Razmak and so on , his two tanks are deployed at an elevation of 9000 feet as well. The regiment is leaving for Gujranwala cantonment by end of this month in fact the advance body is leaving tomorrow.

**2245 hours.** The roar of artillery guns is echoing the valley, it is the army guns which are firing at the suspected targets. It looks odd to pass comments on the military affairs because the men who are directing it are capable and well educated yet I cannot resist to pass on the comments on the effectiveness of such fire if morale is the key factor than these shells are serving their purpose but if inflicting casualties is the aim then it needs revision because artillery guns are practically firing blind and there is no guarantee that two rounds fire one after the other will fall at the same spot thus chances of collateral damage are more in artillery firing than employing cobras. The Cobras are well equipped and have been used in the past for night firing however the level of training remains the key issue because the pilot of Mi-17 with whom I flew from Peshawar to Miranshah had the crib that despite being trained in night vision flying he has not been allowed to practice it for last six years.

**2300 hours.** Two more rounds have been fired.

What is this war all about none is clear and how to fight it remains an enigma. To my mind there seems to be a bit of reluctance on part of army , Scouts on the other hand are more aggressive but being under command of army they are being held in reins furthermore the change of uniform has deteriorated the fighting capability of the Scouts. My query is why cannot the town of Miranshah be cleared of anti state elements? What is stopping army ? there is no political issues attached with such kind of operations because even in present docile state the rebels are inflicting casualties on the military and they are quite serious in numbers thus any further retaliation from them is of no consequence. On the other hand an iron hand is the law of the land, if there is one round being fired from the town then at least a thousand rounds should be fired as an answer, the town can be evacuated similar to Briggs Plan of Malaya but the question of winning the hearts and mind of the population seems to be a futile effort at least in this area. With armour and gun ships placed a mere 100 meters away from the town yet the town is out of bound for all.

On every Sunday there is a curfew imposed in the area to allow the road movement of vehicles for replenishment of troops at posts. A tank is practically a fort on wheels but I have not heard or seen them rolling through the bazar as show of force. If fire is coming then move the tanks and hit the suspected building with a round, Cobras can fire thousands of rounds in minutes they can hover just above the town and practically nothing can move without their notice yet there is a wave of fear not among the natives but among the army and I am part of it.

#### **Day Four.**

**2300 hours.** Return of Superman is on HBO and out side it is calm and apparently peaceful, weather is fine and it had rain rather light showers in the evening, there was no fire from both adversaries today. The Frontier Warfare was dubbed as a kind of gentleman's game and I think it is rather true to some extent at least from military point of view where the civilian casualties are a consideration although the other side is least pushed about this aspect. I awoke early in the morning and then again went to sleep and then woke up at 1000 hours and later cursed my self for wasting this time. Went to the political agent's office the same very official who came with us in the helicopter from Peshawar and was an ardent supporter of using force. In his office few locals were also sitting with their classic turbans but in my opinion none of them was a Malik or man of influence this is what I gathered from their out fit but still I was bit excited to see the local inhabitants. PA was very courteous he rose and so did all others probably it is due to the fact that General is my course mate but I think the PA himself is quite a polished person. He gave me two books one is in Pushto a 800 page book written on Waziristan by a Laiq who works in the political agents office but resides in the city probably he will come tomorrow. I also noticed the 16 volumes of Gazetter of India with coloured maps in the PA's office. I was tempted to ask him about the opium and hashish usage in the agency but wisely pend it off. Then I went to Commandant's office but he had gone for the debriefing, had a telephone chat with Tiger later I collected the data of Tochi Scouts on the USB from the clerk, I appreciate his initiative to run the generator for my work although I insisted that it can wait but he did so, this is the difference between army and Scouts, in army the clerk would have given me ten logics that why the generator cannot be run now in the absence of commandant and would have consulted at least three officers before giving me any answer. I called Havildar Shah and he came promptly again a sign of good regiment, we both went to clothing store first , I also noticed the three boards being painted with the name of Tochi Scouts soldiers who have died in last 100 years, I made a mental note to talk to commandant about this as from where he collected the names. The clothing store

was opened promptly it is bit damp and not well organised. The equipment or rather the clothing is all new and nothing of any historical value. The Scouts have got a winter jacket, a sleeping bag / razzai, desert shoes. The socks are green in colour and woollen in nature so I inquired 'do you wear this in winter?' And Shah replied that we wear it in all seasons, the clothing store keeper then showed the new socks which are again woollen but still bearable on this Shah was rather annoyed as to why it has not been issued so far. I was keen to see the whole equipment but that was all, where are the gloves and I was told that there are no gloves as part of the uniform, neither they have got any kit bag or big pack not even small pack is part of kit. The water bottle is made of plastic and without any discussion absolutely useless.

Later we both went to library and I started from the very first book and then for next four hours I went through each and every book anticipating something to find. What a pleasure it is to go through the complete library, Scouts libraries are bound to have something rare in them for the reason that they remain stationed at one place and being remote they have rich collection of books and Tochi Scouts are no exception although the quantity is not that large. The Blackwood magazine of 1919, John Masters, Winston Churchill speeches and books, travels, geography, fiction and much more. Majority of the books were published and purchased in 1900s the oldest which I found dates back to 1890. Through these books one can mentally travel back in time all books of that era had conservative romance in them, two books caught my attention one deals with the confession of a gigolo and other that of an innkeeper. I was searching for Venus In India but it was not there however I hit the jack pot when I discovered the Standing Orders of the Corps published in 1926 that has lessened my task immensely, few secret documents dealing with the tribes were also found amidst a heap of old newspapers. I had my lunch at 1700 hours.

Later Major General Ali Abbass came to my room and we talked and behave like course mates and then went for a walk which we had to cut short as he had to go for his prayers. I sat and luckily Lt Col Suleman the 25 Cavalry commanding officer also came in and over a cup of tea we shared history. On my inquiry as to what kind of tactics the tanks are using here or more precisely what are the fears and dangers he or the tanks are facing. He updated me that one of his tank in South Waziristan was knocked out of action by the Talibans by hitting it with a SPG-9 rocket launcher, secondly the rebels have been too good in sniping they have shot two tank crew members on their head when they put up their head through the cupola thus now the crew keeps the tank sealed while operating, in another instance the rebels hit the front of the tank while it was turning on a hill track, the front of a tank has 220 mm of armour plating and it is not confirmed as what kind of weapon they employed. The other deadly tactics of the rebels is to use improvised explosive device {IED} which accounts for over 75% of all casualties in military. For tanks the rebels use barrel fill with explosives and then burying it under the earth on the probable route of tanks, the bottom of tank has only 20 mm of armour thus it is deadly. The end result of all these or the cumulative effect is that the tanks now requires a bomb disposal team to walk ahead and infantry to provide protection from snipers. On my query of using the armour personnel carriers {APC} he disagreed with the idea of using them and he cited the Swat operations where an APC carrying 22 soldiers was hit by a rocket and all were killed to him an APC is a death capsule. This led to me saying then what are the chances of survival in a conventional warfare if these weapons cannot hold their ground in such a small scale conflict but his logics are valid that conventional warfare is conventional in nature and easy to fight as the rules of engagements are quite clear. What it means is that in a conventional warfare the soldier knows that he will not be slaughtered if he surrenders.

I had a walk with Ali Abbas and discussions ranged from the exceptional qualities of our late course mate Javed Akhtar who and Ali were regarded as two sides of one coin, he still rang his family on 25<sup>th</sup> April the day Javed died in an avalanche 23 years ago and on 30<sup>th</sup> March which happens to be Javed's birthday. Ali Abbas shared his war experiences of South Waziristan where his brigade became the pioneer in pushing back the rebels, Ali led the attack himself and confessed that it was pure luck that he survived the day as he stood on the banks of a ravine while the fire was coming from all direction and all his staff officers had hit the ground. Ali has a notion that he is lucky and a chosen one by the God and in support of his logic he has his military career to prove his point where he has been kind of unconventional in various tiers of command and staff, I personally think his main strength is his innocence and simple way of life apart from sense of humour. The threat of locals attacking the Miranshah is quite real and he discussed the scenario with Colonel Wajahat and Brigadier Aqeel, he is quite right because even a handful of rebels can create panic and havoc in the camp and it is very much in their capability to strike at the divisional headquarters. I asked Ali do you have any weapons with you and he replied affirmative so I told him I in such scenario will be coming to his room.

There is a war going on but to me the things are not in orders, I don't see any camera surveillance of the area neither any watch dogs or horse patrolling and above all I am off the opinion that soldiers must fire at least 1000 rounds daily without any reason just to keep the upper hand. Officers do walk around in the evening without carrying any weapon and for that matter almost a quarter of soldiers strength at any given time are away from their weapons especially the officers. In classic terms every one must carry a weapon even while attending the call of nature because this is what frontier warfare is all about, unexpected chain of events and sheer brutality.

Every night I sleep in perpetual fear as to when the rocket will come and more dreadfully when a rebel is going to walk into my room I have nothing but an ashtray to hit back, at times I wonder how I am going to react to such situation, there is no escape route my only safety is in keeping the room pitch dark, I better get some knife.

### **Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2012-Day 7<sup>th</sup>**

It is 1000 hours and I am still lying on the bed thinking about how to write the history of this corps I better move fast. In last two days nothing much has happened, let me go backward. Yesterday there was a brunch for the out going political agent Mr Yahya Akhund, it was lavish and well organised the dinning hall was well decorated I was invited through a card and it is almost after three years that I have been invited in such a manner I am grateful to Colonel Wajahat for this I was made to sit on the head table with the General Ali. The discussion among all of them on the table was about the operations with regular jokes and remarks about the last night drill, the over all atmosphere was very informal rather too informal, there seems that these army officers have nothing else to talk about other than the operations, well the point to bring home is that it is normal but then these discussions must take place in a more formal manner in the office which they had and on dinning table the subjects must vary otherwise the orders and instructions lost their impact, Wajahat seems to be the only officer who refrained in getting into the discussion.

I then spent some time in the library with Colonel Wajahat later on since my computer had crashed thus I was mentally worried and made a request to Captain Shoaib for a person to have a look which he promptly did. Tochi Scouts are looking after me the way a newly wed groom is looked after in

the bride's home, they are concerned about my comfort my food the cigarettes that I smoke , it is this pressure that I am feeling lest I do something wrong which I am bound to do sooner or later.

In the evening I went to a walk with M. Shah I went to his barrack , the establishment branch has mixed gathering of all qaums otherwise all other live collectively in a barrack with their qaum members. Shah treated me with tea and cake pieces, the barracks were neat and clean and had an aroma as well quite a change from the normal military barracks. There were no posters or girlie pictures but still it had a unique touch of the area, the floor had the carpet and two pillows were placed I took off my shoes as per tradition. The bed sheet of a khattak havildar was quite colourful . Myself and Shah then walked towards the western side of the airfield, first I noticed a stable where they have mules and donkeys and no horses, there were two young very young mules having a playful time running around and kicking in the air. We went through the wheat fields which is now under the process of being cutting and wrapping. Major General Ali Abbass also went on an inspection of the posts inside the camp with an entourage of vehicles he stopped and we had a chat. Later Shah asked me about the General and I told him we are course mates and Ali is a fine general, in any case Ali enjoys a very good reputation mainly because of his white flowing beard which instantly commands respect in these environments. The firing range post is made of mud all on self help basis it overlooks the road, through the binocular I observed the opposite movement, Shah warned me to watch for my head as the snipers can hit and fire at any time. On the road was normal vehicular traffic a godown was unloading the trucks mainly carrying food sacks probably the wheat, two men were sitting idle in a corner, an old man walked quite close to the post, dosen of boys were playing cricket. The area in front of the post is leveled and raised with mud and barbed wires are erected, the distance of post to the road is approximately 100 metres , inside the post which itself comprises of two observation towers there were three rocket propelled grenades and one light machine gun apart from standard small machine gun, on my question I got the reply from that last time post came under fire was six years ago thus it is mainly the post opposite the bazar which is hot and receives regular rockets from Taliban.

Myself and Shah then walk through the fields and Shah highlighted that it was Commandant Faqir Hussain who converted this barren land into present day fields and planted all these fruit trees it is a mammoth task , hats off to Colonel Faqir for such splendid work because all around now are fruit trees and agricultural land, one tube well was inaugurated by the governor in 2005 in an old building. Batair are favourite pets of Scouts and in the field I saw nets being erected , Shah told me that it is for catching Batair, quite amazing that amidst all this chaos the Batair bazi is on. We walked on the runway, there are two runways one is 32 which is the main and concrete but I noticed that the rubber used for bonding the slabs is coming out and it can cause damage to the aircraft, previously there used to be two commercial flights run by the Peshawar Flying Club from Miranshah. I thought of Lawrence of Arabia and tried to figure out where he lived and I am sure he walked through these fields enjoying the scenic beauty which is sprinkled with ever present fear of a bullet coming through.

Later we both went to the stables and came to know that the two young mules are in fact donkeys born only a fortnight ago. The mules were previously utilised for load carrying and supply of water to the posts they are rather under utilised now because of envoinments, on my inquiry I came to know that not much of horses are under the use of locals.

We later climbed to the air traffic control tower which is the oldest building of the garrison, it is three storeyed high with narrow wooden stairs, a good mannered signaller by the name of Pervez was there he is quite decent and initially I thought he is an officer or from air force. He was busy on telephone trying to find if any aircraft of ours is flying in the area because a unit has inquired in Razmak about because they have heard the sound and Javed at his own gave them the orders to fire and later started checking from various airfields but there was no flight plan of any friendly aircraft.

I asked Shah to get some hashish for me and now lets see what happens ,is he going to report about me, it will be a test of the Scouts culture and mind set. I am quite keen to see the end result, if he tells the commandant it will be quite embarrassing because in all probability the commandant will say ‘sir you should have told me’.

At night there was dinner for the PA from the division again a well organised affair good food, Russian salad, roast beef, mutton, pulao and then a real sweet fruit custard followed by green tea in the lawn. Ali made a very good speech for the PA highlighting how vital is the PA for the success of operations and acknowledging the limitation of army officers in the understanding of native culture, it is not every day that an army general is so candid and forthright in lavishing praise to a civilian. After dinner myself and Ali had a walk in the lawn for well over an hour in which I tried to understand the operation from the beginning.

Ali Abbas on promotion in 2007 was initially marked for 57 infantry brigade but as the luck would have it he landed in another brigade where he reported at night put his family in a guest room and next morning left Okara with the brigade for Taank.

2330 hours.

Finally Havildar Shah or shall I say Airman Shah alias Colonel T. E. Lawrence has finally brought a good quality of hashish good enough for two cigarettes , I had one a few minutes ago and few seconds ago a rocket has been fired presumably from our worthy tribesmen and instantly one round of artillery has been our answer, in the evening when I went for a walk with Shah , I picked him up from his barrack where he was busy playing Ludo, he looked tired in the afternoon when he came to my room I had nothing special to say to him other than to inquire about the hashish because he had left the map sheets yesterday when I was at dinner but where was the stuff but I did not had the courage to ask him so we just made a plan to go for walk after the prayers which are at 1645 hours. We just at the Tochi stadium stairs , Shah had already told me that this stadium which had the plaque of 1957 was in two tier of grounds one higher than the other but Commandant Faqir made it levelled, it was a mammoth task almost twenty trolleys of mud was brought for this purpose. I just ask him general things whether they have fights among themselves since so many qaums live here and although it is rare yet it happens, even in Tochi Scouts there was one Subedar ...who ran amock and became a rebel in 1941. But Shah said no it has never happened, I asked do you Scouts marry the local girls, Shah did not understood me correctly and said ‘yes we do attend local marriage parties, in the past the influential and rich people used to invite the officers and soldiers also’ but on my explaining him the purpose he said ‘ no, we Pathan do marry among our own qaum, if there is no girl in the family then in the qaum but not outside’. He himself offered to go for a walk and volunteered to offer the prayers at the post it has something to do with the fact that the call for prayers went at 1715 hours and he was bit embarrassed for being wrong in the times.

We walked through the wheat fields which have stony wide enough for vehicular traffic pathways with trees at regular paces. While walking I normally tells him the age of the trees and other buildings and sometimes he corrects me and updates on the actual dates. You know sahiba that colonel ghulam hussain did lot of work he quipped when I really praised the work done. There was wheat lying every where, Scouts were not very happy with him because he made them do lot of work, I laughed and said Shah this is something very peculiar about military that no one likes to work more than what he is doing before but than you can see the rewards all around you. He nodded and said this is what every one thinks now. We reached the post and enroute I joked to him that we are being watched by the snipers and anytime he can fire if he so desires so lets thus move with the cover of the trees so as to make him think and he agreed. There is a tank of 25 Cavalry placed on a rampart overlooking the whole of town the Sowar was taking a bath with the help of trailer water we kept on walking forward. The post is classic in nature made of mud and nothing but mud and wood for roof beams. I stood at the wall and had a look at the people and things which I do not have a proper word to explain shall I say my people, my country men or miscreants and talibans or tribesmen, Waziri or Tauri or Mahsud. It is the junction of the town and a fleet of Toyota taxis were parked alongwith the two trucks. A motorcycle rickshaw similar to quin chi of Punjab but different also moved around without much of noise. Three young men walked and the Scout sentry shouted and waved to them so did the Subedar of Tochi Scouts the post commander and they promptly obeyed they were without any weapons. I had the binoculars with me courtesy of Subedar ..... This was the junction of the road coming from north and town starts from here. In front was the boys school and girls college both under control and occupation of tribesmen, I could see clothes hanging out and with more focus I thought I could see women clothing but they were male apparently a vest and shalwar. The gaps were filled with bricks by the tribesmen. Post commander told me that from this building and the one behind it is the base of rocket fire where as the grenades launched from sub machine gun by the miscreants is from the Khushboo hotel direction. I remained fascinated with the area and the people wondering who are they, there was a fear and apprehension this place is void of any rules of engagements. An army captain came up the beauty of the new uniform is philosophically understood here at least in terms of shrinking of ranks, it was only when he introduced himself did I came to know that he is a captain. Aqeel was full of inquisitiveness and I admire his wearing of helmet and bullet proof vest and after few minutes I ponder over the famous quotation that discretion is the better part of valour and I moved down.

The souts at post offered their prayers and my self and Shah were initially offered drinks and then tea in which the Captain Aqeel and his two other soldiers were also invited. Yesterday and today at both posts the quality of drinks was exceptional, yesterday it was juice and today a kind of cola. I also noticed a deep freezer at the post, in the menu tonight was the chicken which we saw being slaughtered while coming towards the post. Later the Wing subedar Major came on the Honda 125 which have been provided to all subedar majors of the Tochi Scouts what a commendable thing, it has enhanced their status and increased their efficiency manifolds, yesterday and today I saw the subedar majors making rounds of the posts, this SM took the post commander up and gave him few instructions and then joined us for tea. Captain Aqeel was still trying to understand from his Havildar as to what happened last Sunday at the Amin Post which was mere a kilometer away on high ground and yet almost soldiers were killed and equal number slaughtered. Myself and shah left and I asked Shah as to what happened at the Amin Post he was not knowing much more than what I already knew and I knew more than him. While walking back we stopped at the Mule Stable and leisurely watched the animals I showed him the two newly born donkeys which were playing with each other, since today is a mothers day thus I witnessed this god gifted



quality of a female caring for the new sibling among the donkeys, the more beautiful one had a heart full of milk from the mother's well.

Now I think that I am sitting on a probable dynamite because there are two military cultures on the protection, one that of Tochi Scouts and other 7 Division of Army. What I have gather here in last seven days is that there is no need of artillery here when Cobras are available. Similar to the 1922 when Royal Air Force took over the role of providing the firepower and Scouts the ground troops and Political Agent the one looking after the politics, thus there is no need of army because army is the other name of firepower and that Tochi Scouts have enough and what is required here is to have the gunships under the command of the Commandant just the way artillery pieces and armour is already under his command as an integral part of the Tochi Scouts.

**Monday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2012.2230 hours.**

Relatively a peaceful day no firing no rockets although there was one artillery round fired early in the morning. Had tea break with Commandant there was another officer who came today from forward post and he narrated some odd events of the Durand Line. I after consultation with Colonel Wajahat got in touch with an old subedar he was enrolled in 1974 and retired in 1996 he updated me regarding the infrastructure of the Miran Shah camp. Majority rather the very first face lift after arrival in Miran Shah took place in 1957 which was probably the result of General Ayub Khan then army chief visit to Miranshah which resulted in the construction of sports stadium, quarter guard and monument apart from construction of main gate. The other major renovation took place starting from 2000 onwards when the mess, museum, centenary monument and construction of living quarters took place and that is still going on with demolishing of buildings and construction of new one is taking place.

In the evening I went to see the tennis and what a treat it was to witness the routine evening games, they have two tennis courts one clay other cemented, court was well marked with limestone and half a dozen pickers in Tochi Scouts track suits with brown Servis Cheetah sports shoes, an array of rackets were there. The game was as usual full of fun, standard being not very high but with progress of time it became better and better and with that I mean that rally and shots were displayed Commandant has a powerful serve. The other players included the artillery commander and logistics commander who paired with commandant. The tennis went on till half past seven in between the game was stopped and every body came to attention at retreat which was sounded at quarter past six. I had a refreshing and warm cup of tea rather I had three cups of tea in the course of the game, a smartly dressed waiter was there to serve. The military tennis is unique from the way tennis is played in a sense that it is full of jokes and yells, no body minds the fouls and generally it is the interpretation of the senior which matters, there was no line man and it was on code of honour. Almost two hundred yards away are the miscreants and rocket and machine gun fire can come down at any time thus this game becomes historical in nature and no where in the world has tennis ever been played so close to the line of fire.

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012-Day 10. 1435 hours**

Well Colonel Wajahat has gone on leave and such is the impact of his office and his own personality that I am feeling relaxed although I have nothing to do with official affairs, this helps in understanding the culture of Scouts in particular and also of the army in general, as long as the Commandant is in his office or even in station there is a fear of appointment and respect for the institution now Lieutenant Colonel Tariq is acting commandant and as such he assumes the mantle and runs the affairs of the Scouts. I had a lively discussion with the officers at tea break over the geo-political scenario. These officers are no exception in having an perception which is prevalent rather always has been as long as there is a civil government in chair that things are wrong and corruption is rampant in every institution. I put across my perspective over the question put across by Tariq ‘ would I support the present regime? And my answer was in affirmative to the surprise of all, on the next question as to why should I do, my answer was that since if we look around in the region we see Libya, Egypt and now Syria descending into chaos despite having very strong economies, Iran is under fire thus the very fact that we as a nation are heading for a general elections not because of any unrest or agitation but for the reason that the assemblies have completed or about to complete their legitimate tenure by itself is a great achievement of the regime and now it is up to public to keep the present status quo or bring in new faces. The world has undergone tumultuous changes in last ten years some very strong economies have crumbled like Spain and Portugal but Pakistan has shown stability. I found almost all less Major Zamir having the same stereo type version of corruption and lack of sincere leadership as the major cause of our problems, I highlighted the fact that it was none other than Mr Jinnah who started this by not accepting Bengali as a national language and by dismissing the government of NWFP after the transfer of power in 1947 but he cannot be criticized under the provision of constitution. Pakistan’s has progressed and is progressing and will progress in future because this is the verdict of history our advancement in nuclear field is a clear indication of our potential our record in sports is another feather in cap. On Durand Line the historical facts are different when Pakistan has adjusted its borders with Iran and China in both cases giving away some territory than what stops us in adjusting the same with Afghanistan, probable cause is the mind set of early rulers who were anti pathan in historical pattern.

Captain Hammad and myself later had tea together in major Zamir’s office the Tochi Scouts medical officer is from Wazirabad an important small town on the eastern bank of Chenab in Punjab. Hammad mentioned that how rumours spread for instance one of his course mate on face book showed his concern for Hammad and highlighted that the exact number of casualties on 8<sup>th</sup> May skirmish with miscreants is own 36 dead and 92 wounded. Captain Hammad laughed and said ‘ Sir I was there from beginning till end and numbers are in range of less than a dosen’ and I am witness to this fact because on the very day when I arrived on that fateful Sunday he came back limping after three hours. I did not asked him then as it was out of customs but now I asked him what happened from his point of day.

It was road opening day on Sunday , one day a week the curfew is imposed in the city and environs for the people to stay inside anybody seen outside is taken as a foe whether he has committed a hostile act or not. The tribes have come up with a technique and tactics which is novel effective lethal and yet primitive. Improvised explosive devices {IED} are the mostly deadly weapons after suicidal human bomb, in it explosives are placed in a container a shopping bag or hid under the bush or buried under the ground or road and then when the convoy is over it or a vehicle or a party of soldiers it can be detonated either through a mobile phone or a time watch or even pressure. The state has terminated the mobile communication in the tribal frontier. Presently a Sapper walks in front with prodding device thus it is a sapper not the infantry which is leading the war against the tribes. This sapper is protected by a section of

infantry or the scouts presently it is done by the army , this is tiring and time consuming because to clear inch by inch of road which is winding and has abundant cover in terms of green patches and boulders thus by and large it is a chance which has to be taken by all. Hammad had gone with his quick reaction force of 24 Scouts in three Toyota Vigos and an ambulance to the Amin Post which is around two kilometers from here and made of mud and on a high ground overlooking the valley that lies on the south western edge and the exit towards the South Waziristan through Razmak. The G. O. C Ali Abbas had gone to Islamabad on a week end, within the Miranshah the divisional policy of leave is one week after one month of stay and fourteen days after two months which is quite liberal rather more than what troops and officers had in the Siachen deployment, however commanders seldom use this on themselves especially Ali normally goes on an odd week end after a month and this time it was his youngest son's son birthday so he had taken an extra day off as well. Thus commander 103 Brigade became the acting divisional commander for the duration.

According to Captain Hammad after some time he went to Bannu Road check post and later he was called back in the area at the base of Amin Post. He went there and saw the commanding officer 36 Baloch Regiment alongwith the brigade commander. The intent was to search a mud compound next to a Aligand, it seems so normal and casual that no need of having verbal orders was felt and neither they were given by any one. The affair from the young scout officer's perspective was an enjoyable experience and he laid down under a tree with the another officer and enjoyed and talked about the forthcoming event, anything can happen this could be their last hour. The compound was composed of three mud houses, Scouts Subedar Shariff was the first one to enter and he climbed onto the roof without any help of ladder and shouted that ' we have come here for search bring out your women out side and we will respect them'. There was no reply and Hammad and other officer Captain Mehmood entered the two mud huts simultaneously and kicked the door and in they dashed , that is the moment when everything in the world stops and next move is the one on which you're your existence depends. The third mud house remained silent somehow the other it was not charged simultaneously and now all of a sudden the door opens and a man fires a burst of AK- 47 which hits the Mehmood on the legs and with this fire a panic starts and every kind of fire by the inner and outer cordon starts opening on to the mud house. These search parties came out of the compound and took cover in the nullah and remain in the same position, after some time I went to the ...post which is on the road coming from Bannu

### **Yesterday.**

Yesterday I had a bad day as I slept most of the day and tried to figure out how to go about the history it was helped by the hashish given by Shah and it was the major factor of laziness as well. The thing with hashish is that it gives new and wonderful vistas of research and ideas but makes one lazy enough to just have these in minds but I have to put them in black & white. In the evening I went for a walk with Shah, we first had a walk inside the complex talking and guessing about the probable dates of construction of various buildings, the photographs which I saw in old albums clearly indicates that the outer cordon was made of soldiers barracks and that still exists, the tree next to the hospital is also there but now it has become old. The lone hut over the barrack at the main gate is the command net where they are still using the Morse Code system and according to the operator it is the quickest and most effective, they have two such machines. From there we went outside the gate { Mohammad Ali shaheed Gate} and first had a stop at the subedar Mirjan's wood trading shop; he was not there were two locals who offered

cup of tea which I politely declined and myself and Shah walked through the family quarters, these quarters were property of Haqqani the world renowned terrorist but now they have been converted into family quarters of Scouts, the main hujra of Haqqani is the now family and women training centre and Haqqani's mosque is used by all.

The children were playing cricket in the stony park, there is a college also which is now deserted and it an army battalion living inside however in the college playing fields the local boys were playing cricket. Coming back to the park, behind the park a tubewell was running and it is quite pleasurable and soothing to see water gushing out with such volume, a girl of eight years was playing with her friends riding the tri cycle she I am afraid has now entered into an age where she is bit over age to sit on a tri cycle. The Tochi Scouts have their own dairy farm and they have one of the most healthy cows which I have seen at least in Pakistan, they recently purchased seven cows and two buffaloes and now have over a dozen milk producing animals, they are selling milk at an astonishing low price of rupees twenty per litre, there is a bio gas plant as well with a capacity of 15- 20 kilograms per day. Myself and Shah had cup of tea at the dairy farm, traditionally the scouts put out their steel charpoys for us with pillows and we had tea, the tea with pure milk now tastes bit different and it was with difficulty that I finished it off amidst the cow dung smell. We later walked back through the Christians quarters, there are two colonies of Christians here one in the political agent colony and other here in the Tochi Scouts yet there is no remnant's of any old church in the Miranshah, now the present commandant has made one in the colony by converting one of Haqqani's residence into church but it has no cross.

I dropped in at Major General Ali Abbas room which is next to me and had tea with him, it is very soothing to sit with a course mate and Ali is a fine officer although we have very little in common, our views about the world are poles apart. The discussion drifted to the world politics, Ali has a theory that the Americans are behind the militants because they want to disintegrate Pakistan therefore they are supporting factions which are fighting against the army. He further elaborated that India has opened ten consulates on Pakistan – Afghan border mainly to destabilize the country but they will not succeed as Pakistan is an ideological country a blessed one with the holy prophet himself taking care of it and it was the holy prophet himself who ordered Mr Jinnah while he was in self exile in London to go back to India. It is only as a course mate that I can strongly disagree with him and I did because my point of view is that a strong and stable Pakistan is in the interest of India because of her economic compulsions and also for America as well, the topic then touched the Rodick Mines in Baluchistan and how Americans are creating hindrance in its progress. Somehow the other this American hate phobia is difficult to understand and on this we both agreed because we both come from a background where we had an access to the western cultures resultant in any Olympics we would always support the Americans in their matches against Russians, how this has changed is an enigma. Presently Ali narrated that two thousand militants of Tehrik Taliban Pakistan has been forced to leave Miranshah, I do not think that it has happened because here in the camp the rumours circulate quite fast and it is more of morale boosting but I nodded my head in agreement with Ali. The major groups fighting against the army are difficult to pin point but the main leader is Baitullah Mahsud of South Waziristan, Commander Nazir Group popularly known as CNG and then Gul Bahadur of Miranshah, now the CNG and Gul Bahadur have left Mahsud and are operating independently but their targets are Americans in Afghanistan and not the Pakistan Army, the militants have been stressing that they have no ideological conflict with Pakistan Army so it is better if they leave the area.

The million dollar question that whether Pakistan Army is helping these groups is obvious from the events of last ten days, army is confined to the camp a prisoner of own walls, none can dare to go out for the fear of Taliban is paramount, what is that fear ? it is the brutality of them and knowing fully well that no logic can appeal to them so to say that Pakistan Army is helping them is absolutely false, sympathies are there but nothing beyond this. To me and many other living here there is no grand strategy or designs it is mere survival, all the cards are in the hands of locals they dictate the terms, army or political agent has cosmetic influence they can only talk and here it is not words that matter but the firepower which is understood by all.

**Today.2350 hours.**

I have finally finished the hashish in the morning and decided that enough is enough. Went to the political agency office the new political agent has not arrived yet. The office area is similar to any such compound all over the Pakistan, saw two men sitting in the veranda pondering over an antique map of the area showing demarcation of individual lands, few natives sitting under a shade and waiting for their settlement of cases. I was taken by the Tochi Scouts sentry to the superintendent's office whom I explained my purpose of visit, he was in picture and send me to another office which had the notice of English Record Office, I was again interviewed by a clerk and then after much thought he took me to another office where he talk in Pashto to another clerk, I could see heap of old files and just wanted to sit there and read them but I was taken to head clerk's office who after a short interview gave the decision that before proceeding any further I must have a written letter indicating what I want, I left. I went to the Major Zamir's office who immediately dialled assistant political agent and spoke in Pashto and matter was resolved.

The Tochi Scouts firing team is ready and Captain Hamza is in charge of them a fine cavalry officer he is in fact the regiment officer of the Commandant, another officer was sitting bit gloomy as his wife was admitted in hospital in Peshawar and wanted to go on leave, but his leave was turned down by the commandant on telephone , Major Zamir gave him consolation. Lieutenant Colonel Rab Nawaz also came in and we had tea. Our discussion touched the officers posting and tenures in Scouts. The account officer was also there and I inquired how they draw the pay, the procedure is that roll sheet is made in the Scouts and check is signed by the political agent and pay is drawn from the National Bank which is located within the agency office compound, now a days the pay or the amount comes from Peshawar on helicopter and then distributed among the troops. Since the troops are living on qaum system thus any one member going on leave takes the pay of all others to their hometown as they all belonged to same area.

Meanwhile there were fire shots and Rab Nawaz mentioned that the sound of fire indicates that it is coming from city area and it was true, they were firing in the town no body bothered to seek any further information on this. I went to museum and saw the old albums again. Had lunch and then a long siesta. Awoke up at 1900 hours and after shower went to Ali's room and had a cup of green tea and few dates. Today our discussion hovers around the technical developments that have taken place within the division. Ali has done quite an innovation in improving the night vision capability of the posts and troops. He had come up with an directive to improve the defence of the posts, the posts presently are having anti personal mines twenty meters away which Ali now wants to push back to three hundred meters, the first line will be high concertina wire then mines then low concertina wire and twenty meters in front of the post will

remain free of any obstacle for maintenance purposes. The major breakthrough has been made in night vision devices. There are approximately 60-70 NVG's in every infantry battalion and they have been supplemented with infra red light which is portable and rechargeable thus enhancing the vision up to three hundred meters, the common web cameras have also been turned into infra red cameras with a range of hundred meters. Rifle G-3 have been modified to have night vision sights and telescopes which have been purchased from the open market for 6000 rupees similarly the small tri pod for the rifles have been purchased. There are twenty cameras operating around the fence of the camp and four inside. Mortars have been modified to act as mines by putting together four mortar shells and taking out their firing mechanism and joining them together through ordinary wire and firing switch in the hand of post commander. All very impressive the only draw back is that all this has to be tested under the battle conditions the attack on Amin Post last Sunday would have been the ideal test but it was not put into action. Another infantry brigade is coming as reserve. So much of fire power and man power but still the initiative is with the miscreants and that is the hard pill to swallow that army or for that matter Ali Abbass has not been able to dictate his terms and they are nothing but safe passages of road and liberty and freedom to search any compound suspected of harbouring the miscreants. No military vehicle can operate on road with having massive firepower protection and even then as displayed on Amin Post the miscreants still strike and create panic among the army.

### **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012**

I went to the Political Agent's office but before that I received a call from Colonel Sardar Sajjad just to say hello, I am grateful to him for being so considerate, he is leaving for America on Sunday for a week's course at Alabama and then a month long leave wish him the best.

The same story at PA's office but the staff was friendly, I observe that the tourism calendar in the superintendent's office was covered with white sheet only the dates were visible on my inquisitiveness he said that since the picture distracts while praying and the calendar is in western direction therefore it has been covered. Amin Khan the clerk in charge was called by the assistant political agent whom I had met at the farewell brunch and dinner of the political agent was very kind he just told Amin to open up the old records almirahs and let me find what ever I am looking at, that serves the purpose.

The English record office is made up of two rooms, in the first room a table and two chairs on which Amin works and the adjoining room is devoid of any furniture just a date mat on the floor and a heap of files in one corner the rooms have been made two storeyed by making almirahs from ground to top. Amin opened one almirah and handed me over the files I was not impressed it dated 1961 then another file dated 1951 regarding the visit programme of governor another file 1946 regarding the status of head clerks in political agents office another file dealing with the character certification of natives dated 1941 and so on finally three files dating back to 1896 they were regarding the pay and allowances of staff. In the meantime many tribesmen came and moved around, I just sat on the datemat and started scanning the files and lost track of time, there files of 1919 regarding the defence of the agency another one dealt with the administrative report of the agency in 1937 and there few pages about Tochi Scouts then two very old pages written by a Scout Officer and another report on Tochi Scouts dating back to 1961, I was unable to hide my happiness, Amin now starting bringing the files the Frontier Gazettes and similar to them, the thaw has melted and there was warmth in his dealing he inquired whether I would like tea or cold drink I politely declined yet he brought a bottle of Mountain Dew, this hospitality of Pathans is

legendary and one comes across it at every step here whether own Tochi Scouts or the political agent's office. Amin was muttering something about the British he was praising them for keeping the record so well, by this time the lunch time was there he offered me join him but I made an excuse to him. Amin lives in Mir Ali and everyday comes to work which takes him almost two hours of travelling one way. I was surprised to find him living in Mir Ali and travelling amidst all this chaos daily. The things have gone so wrong here and such is our sieged mentality that any person moving out of the fort area seems to be travelling to outer space, I made a mental note to interact more with him and to learn about the life style he is living, I am interested in social aspects of the life what kind of relationship he is having with his wife and in laws, does he have any fear from Talibans regarding his working in the political agency. So far it seems that Talibans have not imposed such restrictions on the locals but if they do then the machinery is bound to collapse. It was a happy hour. When I came out of that storeroom only then I realised that it is Friday. The loudspeakers all around especially the one in city were blazing with the Khutba, since it was in Pashto so I could not make it but from the tone it was militant in nature.

I in the evening at 1700 hours went to Muhammad Shah's room and from there we both started walking, the sun still hits you at this time. Normally we decide after we have started walking where to go, as we were in the scouts Stadium I looked at the cricket pitch and inquired when it was made although I knew it has been made under present commandant's directive. Shah told me that not long ago a cricket tournament was held here in which Scouts, Army and civilian team from the city also participated I was surprised to hear that teams from city are allowed to play and take part in cricket matches but then this is what Scout culture and way of dealing things is all about. In other settled cities and cantonments the interaction between the military and civilian is almost non existent especially in terms of sports.

We walked towards the army camp enroute we watched the making or rather erecting of aviation hangar it is quite a task and I wondered how this crane has been brought here quite a risk. Before the army camp I saw another wall about Tochi Scouts and I passed a comment that it must be something to do with Lieutenant Colonel Aashiq Hussain he seems to have done wonder here, mess, gardens and now this assault course, hats off to him. Army has made a monument and it is quite beautiful and well laid, the names are ever increasing and even now it is almost full, the dates of actions are not given only the rank, name and unit of deceased soldier and officer is given. I found the name of a second lieutenant from Northern Light Infantry here he is the second subaltern to have died here in Waziristan the other one is Flury who died in June 1919. The army area has a traditional gate as well it seems that the army is here to stay and this will become a permanent cantonment. Area is open and barren all around, orchard has made by the engineer battalion and 8 Frontier Force battalion. We moved towards the Scouts area through a short cut and crossed the old strip, the college building in front and the mobile company's tower on the left and then through a narrow path which has a stinking air all around, the college building before its inauguration was occupied by the army and now I could see the soldiers bullet proof vests and rifles all stacked with the windows which had no glass rather army issued blankets were put for shade.

We entered the grid station but before that there is a vocational institution again under occupation of an army unit, Shah told me that American troops used to live here for short duration and that is why it is so highly secured, he further stated that no one was allowed to come here. At grid station entrance there was a bit chubby Punjabi Havildar and a young soldier, they were not sure what to do because we were such an odd couple Shah in his white kameez shalwar long beard and white cap on his head a typical miscreant dress code and I dressed in trouser and bush coat. They belonged to 36 Baloch Regiment the

same regiment that has suffered casualties on 7<sup>th</sup> May incident I condoled with him and we both walked to the edge of the grid station there is a colony of half a dozen houses or quarters which are the property of WAPDA through a walkway having eucalyptus trees and a barbed wire, there were few children playing and it is criminal to call it playing because there was nothing to play with, these young toddlers were just rolling around, quite a number of hens also running around including a pair of rare Turkey, the natives have a very strong liking for the pets especially the fowls. The post is not that well laid as other Scouts posts but they have made a very fine green mosque on a raised ground, when we entered the compound one soldier was praying. I had a look at the area, the area on the north is the dry river bed and quite green there are few civilian houses all made of mud, in the near distant a colour full building which I thought must be a hospital but the local sentry told me it is a madrassah.

The post is well defended a mud wall with concertina wire then twenty metres of anti personal mines and then high concertina wire but these wires were broken, the post also has a video camera on the top which revolves around and there is a laptop which allows the operator to monitor the area the same footage is being observed in the divisional control room which I have not seen so far. There was occasional traffic on the periphery an odd motorcycle a four wheel drive and so on. The soldiers' at post have made a garden also and regarding the hens moving around they are the property of the family quarters.

On our way back we were invited by the canteen contractor Shah Rukh Khan who was sitting on the cemented water tank with another person and three children, I accepted his hospitality, the other person introduced after having my introduction as a person from inter services intelligence, he speaks Pashto and has served in aviation bases at Multan and Rawalpindi. Shah Rukh narrated the good old days when he could walk freely and entertained his guests his biggest regret was that under present circumstances it is very difficult to entertain a guest and this is a matter of disgrace for him. He told me how few years back none could talk even in a high tone to a stranger in the town because he was the guest of the town.

We moved forward and I saw a very cute little girl with golden hair and blue eyes she was just crying the way toddlers do but she reminded me of my daughter and I talked to her for few minutes caressing her hair and inquiring what has made her cry I wish I could have the sweets with me for such events.

On our way back I entered into the army public school or more precisely Scouts Public School, it is the efforts of Colonel Wajahat who was commandant in 2001-2003 and seeing is believing, a fine school with its own hostel for boys and other classes included nursery and play group apart from imparting study and education till class eight, it has a vast playing area with merry go round and slides. The boys were busy in playing cricket in fact that was the only game being played and there were no less than half a dozen pitches where game was being played. I watched in amusement and in my mind came back the Aitcheson College Lahore where I was the house master for a brief period. One boy who was bowling with left hand had a perfect bowling action and bowled quite well I will not be surprised to see him at international level in couple of years. This cricket is the major change in the culture and the most important factor in changing the outlook of the new generation, this is the binding factor. In the past the tribal children were more attracted towards the football and they still do in the World Cup time but cricket has taken over and with this the inherent hostility also diminished. I was told by the shah that daily students come from city they are dropped at the city gate away from the anti personal mines and for short



period the passage is open and they walked in and similarly they goes back in the evening same holds true for lady teachers but I think I will carry out more research on the subject. There is another school on the opposite side of the road then there is the college which I mentioned before then another school Al Azhar which is opposite to the civil stadium so quite a number of educational institutions.

I met Major Zaheer from aviation on my way back he told me that they had gone in the morning to the Razmak to lift a casualty. I took him to the tennis court for a cup of tea after bidding good bye to Shah. At the tennis court I was approached by a bulky dark colour officer who as a matter of fact started asking me questions , where is your family how many children you have got how old are they, I do not mind these queries because this is typical army culture and when I asked him politely about his regiment so as to start any conversation but he was bit reluctant and then said I am from military intelligence and looking after the intelligence matter of the division and it acme to me as no surprise because somehow the other these intelligence officers have this false sense around them. They are absolutely useless in this area because majority of them are unable to speaks Pashto thus they are at loss but to make sure that they are taken seriously they have only ideas and plans to make the area peaceful and this colonel was no exception, he gain belongs to the category where glass is half empty to him there was corruption everywhere and none was sincere with the country, a theme which I have heard umpteen time and practically fed up with it but I listened to him and then gave counter arguments which with the help of historical evidence proves that nothing is as bad as it seems, the country is progressing despite all hardships and comparing to the regional anarchy we are rather lucky and fortunate to have a stable political system in place and soon we are heading for our general elections which is a mile stone. This area has its own historical and cultural values and they must be respected and should not be treated at par with city life and values and laws. The colonel had a plan to disarm all the tribesmen similar to United Kingdom pattern and I pointed out that in America you can buy weapon from the shopping mall similar to the pattern you buy a mobile phone.

### **Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2012 .**

It is a close holiday and spent the day in the room rather the suite, it is a four room set, one main sitting room with traditional sofa set a seven seater, it has French windows which gives almost a complete view of the lawn then a small room which is the dinning room with a small fridge it has also window, then a master bedroom a changing room and washroom, even washroom has a window and an exit. There are two split air conditioners and a wall mounted television. All doors are made of pure wood and same holds true for all other furniture, only the bed seems to be modern . The electric system I have not fully understood till now, there is agrid station which provides electricity on timings then there is generator and finally urgent power system{UPS} and all the lights are linked with one or the other system, it at times happen that there is light in one rom but there may be no light in the certain power sockets. There is a telephone in the room which I have used only for calling mess on number 136 and to ask for cup of tea in the morning.

In the evening went for a walk with Havildar Shah towards the monument as I wanted to check certain data from the names written there, on the way we stopped at the Shah Rukh Khan's canteen , nothing special other than the torches. I inquired about purchasing weapon from the market at Miranshah but Shah Rukh flatly declined of having any such contact probably he is apprehensive of my credentials I will try again.

We went to three different posts after walking through the Political Agent's colony. The colony is similar to many other such pattern colonies all over Pakistan. Houses small in size with distorted paint, an odd out of order truck, a small shop, few odd shops with little crowd, hens running around and children sitting idle, one particular boy was neat and clean with hair comb and surma in his eyes, I recall the days of Multan in 1992 when my wife used to dress my son every evening like this. The way to posts was most unusual and most unlike military, you have to follow the colony road and comes to a dead end in front of government degree college for women and then step down and follow the dirty stream and through narrow path and cross it while stepping on three stones and then climb up and you are standing next to what is called telephone exchange post, infact these are two posts the first one is what I mentioned just now and the other is almost adjacent and is known as Civil Works post.

The telephone exchange post is as the name indicates in the telephone exchange complex the post commander a Khattak from Karak received us, he was bit perplexed as to who am I but Havildar shah introduced me. Everyone comes and shakes hand some embraced and I had a look at the post, unlike other posts which are made in open and that of mud this one is in a built up area in a constructed building and as such most pathetic in layout. The scouts as usual had their kitchen established in one corner and accommodation in quite a number of rooms. The way to top is quite easy through well laid stair and on top of roof there are three firing spots there was a machine gun with rockets in one. I peered through the fox hole and post subedar narrated how the fire came on 7<sup>th</sup> May, they were fired upon by two RPG-7 rockets by the miscreants from the frontal narrow alley, 'they did not aimed it properly rather they fired with one hand in a general direction towards us ... the rockets went over us. We fired almost seven rockets on the buildings and over a thousand bullets' said the post commander. We stood on the parchment overlooking the street below, it was evening time and few shops were open and they deal with auto parts, a lone tribesman walked in a heavy dark colour kameez shalwar without any weapon. The houses or the buildings in front were all poked with gun fire, they all are hotels the auto mechanics who work here normally comes from Bannu and as such these are their residences. I noticed air conditioners in the buildings just one odd and that too of window type have not seen any split in bazar. On the other side I noticed a massive red brick construction going on and I was informed that this is the new market which is being constructed by the local chieftains, there is a conglomerate of four. I was surprised to see such construction going on in such a war torn town and that speaks for the facts itself, none is fool to put the money in any risky construction but the locals must have the knack that this is worth it. The bricks comes from Bannu daily, now that is interesting that army or for that matter the state can operate this kind of traffic only once a week by imposing curfew and on the other side these locals are moving freely day and night, now there is none on the road to check them the state is not visible on the streets it is only in this fortified compound.

We had cup of tea which is customary and then took leave the subedar came to see us off till the gate, something more about the telephone exchange it is in working condition shaving a capacity of 5000 lines out of which 4500 lines are working and thee is no tapping of the phones. People from city comes daily for work whom the scouts know by face and are allowed to enter, any body desirious of rectifying his faulty number has to contact the line man from his area but none other than these linemen are allowed to enter the compound, I forgot to ask how they collect bills and what about the net working, for this I have to get in touch with some telephone exchange official.

This public works post is almost adjacent, almost four years ago three terrorist stormed in through a hole in the wall and occupied the building they were flushed out by the scouts which suffered casualties also. The colony which is next to it was opened by Premier Bhutto I was old by the another Khattak Post Commander , which I presumed was in 1973. Let me take you a bit in past, I met Major General Naseerullah Babar a former governor of Frontier Province and he narrated that how in 1973 he put forward the idea to Mr Bhutto that if our boundary runs to the Durand Line then we must have control of it also and that is how Mr Bhutto then made a whirlwind tour of all political agencies from Gilgit to Zhob, that period was also a high point of cold relations between Pakistan & Afghanistan.

I also observed the Boys College on whom none has any control but it is still operative and so is Girls College, I inquire how do these girls enter the compound and answer was that the Tochi Scouts have employed one female from Christian colony which physically checks the students and there is a scanner also but both are superfluous arrangements because when you look at the culture the fact is that here every thing is done on your own judgement , a soldier will not peep into a car which has a female passenger and in my these two visits towards this side I have not seen that female security staff. There is another post which is made by occupying two quarters I did not climb into that rather sat out on a chair and observed the people sitting at the far side of the wall.

Later we walked through another path which took us to the far side of the colony where a long ground more suitable for Polo because of its layout was having a proper football match in which one team was wearing a uniform also, the world famous team shirts like Manchester United and AEG were visible probably these were the popular shirts available in the market, I told Shah to sit and lets watch the game, the players were of varying age I noticed some old men too and then I realised how this colony has adjusted itself to being besieged by miscreants; it is through sports in normal circumstances the game might still have been played but not with this zeal because now there is no other outlet for majority of the men as they cannot take a risk of going out especially those working closely with military. The doctors are there which are working in the lone hospital of the town, there are two I believed and one of them lives in side the colony and goes out daily to hospital so does few sweepers. Later as we were walking back I saw two young girls playing outside their homes on the green patch, they have made a kind of doll house and one was working on putting some flowers in it and other a bit far was doing something with the expired medicines probably portraying a hospital. I had a look at the design of the doll house which was marked on the grass with stones, had a bit of conversation with girls and they were replying ok but then changed their tone when they saw the other people coming from the match area. On my way back I noticed that the grass around the Scouts monument has been mowed freshly.

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2012**

**Nothing unusual other than the fact that the breakfast had a aloo paratha which made me drowsy and it was with great difficulty that I managed to walk to Havildar Shah's barrack and we both set out for a walk, I said lets go towards the runway for the reason that I thought I may be able to photograph the Cobras coming from the day's patrolling but they I think flew back. It was road operating day and there fore many Scouts have come back from the posts, it is a custom or tradition that the friends or the qaum makes a food for them which is usually meat cooked by them in the barracks, today I saw four such cooking going on in the barracks and Shah told me the background. Wonderful weather dark grey clouds, cool breeze and then light drizzle. Met the**

brigade commander of 103 Brigade and I thought of getting his viewpoint on the matter I made an appointment with him. Havildar Shah's relative is in the Butt Post and as such we decided to walk there, I took pictures while standing on the runway thus I can correlate all around because runway is aligned with north. The wheat is now getting wasted, the fields were thinly vegetated and we agreed that it is only that man who has to live on the outcome of this field and wheat who will work hard and not the military, Shah again remembered Colonel Ashiq Hussain for his efforts. The apricot trees are almost ripe and we plucked few, very nourishing and sweet another week and they will be ready if by that time the soldiers left anything on it.

I have been on this post before but today the post commander showed me the area , I actually saw the pillars of Durand Line at Ghulam Hasan and moving westward, The natives were playing cricket outside the wall, they were in trousers I saw two talibans carrying weapons with long hair and cap, many people were sitting on the green fields enjoying the weather. This used to be the Scouts post and we kept our firing range equipment here but for last six years this has become the taliban's post. The post soldiers all prayed at the Maghrib time the post has made a mosque as well a mud bricked room.

Later at night I had tea and food with Ali Abbas and our conversation turned to the heroes and why we need it, Ali said that a hero has to die young otherwise his heroism gets polluted with time with all kind of judgements passed, I absolutely agree with him. We talked about heroes, Captain Javed our course mate was one, so was M.M. Aalam the Pilot who shot down four Indian aircraft in 1965 War, Ali narrated an incident. ' I was in Karachi in the brigade in year 2001 and my brigade commander was full of nationalism, he decided that the chief guest for Independence Day celebrations will neither be the divisional commander nor the corps commander but the legendary M.M. Aalam , who came in his old Volkswagon and was well received he was the icon and every one was eager to shake hand with him , M.M. Aalam spoke about Mr Jinnah ' I have seen him in hell' and this was the end of his hero worship by the brigade commander. The point which Ali was highlighting was that a hero has to live up to the expectations and this is where the trap lies because as a human he can make an error, I quoted him Brigadier Raheel Sehgal and the Captain .... Who later both fell down from that mantle. Brigadier Tariq Mahmood TM is the sole example who died the way a hero should die, I gave him the example of Captain Jawad Aslam Cheema who I feel was a hero in classic sense, height, figure and family wealth yet he opted for Siachen and died there in avalanche.

Tuesday Day 16<sup>th</sup> . 2345 hours.

Just came back from the farewell dinner for Colonel Aneeq the outgoing colonel staff of this division , he is going to Bahrain. Wonderful food only in terms of tikkas otherwise almost all military food have same taste, ice cream was an exception because it was handmade. In the day I went to 103 Brigade Headquarters, major Zamir gave me commandant's vehicle and I feel embarrassed for this , it is after years that I have sat in a chauffeur driven car, it had dark glasses and none checked us on our way to the division. It was difficult to find the 103 brigade , I had not gone in the area before it is adjacent to the divisional artillery, I asked from few soldiers but all gave typical blank look, as compare to Scouts the army jawans apparently have confidence issue among themselves. I saw two tennis courts of the divisional artillery, frankly they are demoralising

for the reason where as the Tochi Scouts have their courts made long time back the divisional artillery courts are recent production, the point is that this game is played only by the officers and it requires manpower to keep it in playing conditions and above all it requires soldiers to act as pickers thus it looks odd in operational area, a football ground or basketball court is the games that soldiers play in field conditions and officers must play with them to interact. Finally we found the 103 Brigade and instantly I sent back the vehicle. Colonel Mateen the deputy commander of the brigade as all operational brigades have colonels as the deputy is known to me accidentally, he is from 42 Punjab Regiment the very regiment with which I was attached in Siachen and we must have met there but I do not remember but he does. Colonel Sardar Sajjad other day rang me and said I can get in touch with Mateen for any hash etc and I rang Mateen yesterday and gave the reference and he invited me to come over for a cup of tea without understanding the purpose, thus was my aim of going there. But Mateen is not the type and he apologised for that but I made him comfortable and our conversation soon touched the favourite topic of finding the issue of Waziristan issue. Mateen is a Punjabi and as such favours ruthless use of force to settle the score. His version of Amin Post fiasco is different, according to him the Scouts never entered the compound and they are in league with locals and as such are reluctant to open fire, I took the Scouts side and said that four of their sepoy's were also hit and even if we keep the Scouts aside what rationale you have for not using firepower on that day because the fact remains that the sepoy's of 36 Baloch ran away despite you having six tanks and two Cobras. He said finally that it was miscoordination and somehow we could not fire back, the old saying that truth is the first victim of war seems true here as no one is accepting the responsibility of that fiasco and this blame game is just getting worse. Now if this is the situation with in a division over an operation which took just two miles away almost a fortnight ago then think of Pakistan – America relation ship over the war against terror.

I visited the clothing store again because Havildar Shah told me that they have something to show me. I met a subedar who happens to be the qaum commander of Marwat Qaum as well. A well disciplined person because he vacated the main seat for me and asked for tea or juice which I politely declined. The things which they wanted to show were nothing of interest an old bandolier, a web belt and two covers of Kukri. I asked the subedar to explain the qaum system and he highlighted that asa qaum they are collectively responsible for the misconduct of their any one soldier, any fine is payed collectively. The topic then broached the general situation and he was very upset over the media which has nothing else to show other than a pessimistic view of the country and this in his opinion was harmful for the new soldiers who are not getting the required dose of good things happening in the country , I fully agreed with him. The fact is that he is the second person after Havildar Shah who has raised the point of irresponsible commercial media playing with the emotions of people. This subeadr was very critical of the fact that the media is showing caricatures of head of state and prime minister and as such eroding the authority and the decorum of the office.

I had a lunch and then a nap after which my conscious pinched me for not writing anything today regarding the Tochi Scouts history.

I went to Ali Abbas room to inquire about the proposed visit to Razmak and he said tomorrow and then made arrangements for my stay as well. I told him that tonight they have

Keema Kareelay in the dine out and we talked about how as young officers we used to look forward to dinners in which general officers were also there. I inquired about newspaper and he also realised and call his attendant for this who replied that for last two days there is no newspaper and ali very politely said ok. I took Ali to the task and teasingly said that in good old days it was unthinkable that the newspaper has not been given to the general and he just smiled back, he asked whether I am coming to the dinner and since I did not received any invitation so I made an excuse that I will be taking the food in my room and came back. After five minutes I got a call from the divisional intelligence colonel who was sorry for not sending me the invitation and said it is on way and this is how I attended this dinner. I am made to sit on the main dinning table with the brigade commanders and they all seem to be very cordial and respectful, I am enjoying that typical phase of life where you are course mate of the general officer.

Ali very high of the out going colonel staff but then I think the way a hero should die young similarly these after dinner speeches should be short and crisp. Ali talk about the contribution of the colonel staff which were many but then he said that the division has made two guest rooms in the Peshawar and colonel staff's wife decorated that and in same good faith he highlighted that the staff house in Peshawar was also renovated by his wife. Now this looks perfect in a mess dine out where the lady is also present but here these very remarks have negative connotation among the officers who I am sure right now must be taking a hell of wordily fire on the colonel staff for his this performance. Ali is too humble in his words and now I think it is going too far because every time he says that I was not worthy of promotion which is absolutely incorrect, he has that qualities which have resulted in his becoming a general. What I like most about his speech was his view point regarding the Peoples Party which in his opinion is a progressive party and this country has to go about the life in a moderate manner, I am sure his remarks will be very effective in influencing the mind set of officers.

Tomorrow I am going to Razmak, luckily I met the Commandant of Shawal Rifles also he is from 53 Cavalry. Ali is adamant that he will go by road from Razmak to .... But staff officers are making sure that he should go by air, Ali wants to save the national resources but staff is thinking of his protection.

The first test match between England & West Indies have been won by England in an interesting manner, Chanderpaul is still a force to reckoned. Also saw the highlights of 1988 Seoul Olympics, Flo Jo was there with her smiling winning face.

**Razmak, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2012, Wednesday**

. 2030 hours.

Sitting in the room shivering with cold and waiting for the dinner which is at 2100 hours with Ali Abbass and commander 212 Brigade. John Masters was here and for last almost two decades I have ben

visualising about this place, it was built starting from 1922 onwards and somewhere in 1935 the very first two ladies arrived here albeit in a disguise their footprints are preserved not more than fifty yards from the room where I am staying.

We took off in the morning from Miran Shah at 1030, before that I just stood at the tarmac watching the helicopters getting ready for the mission, there were two Cobras which were parked in the hangar they were towed to the tarmac, one Bell 412 was getting ready, one Puma was there in which we had to travel. Major Zaheer was there so I asked him can I take snaps of the helicopter he was surprised and said 'sir why not'. Being myself an army aviator I knew that it is better to ask because any youngster can say 'why are you taking pictures it is not allowed', one has to be careful with army pilots they can stand up so establish their writ and command and tarmac is their jurisdiction. We walked towards the Cobras, Major Amrose a young pilot with a long beard happens to know me thus ice was broken and we had good conversation. The Cobras here are armed only with 750 rounds of cannon and no rockets or TOW missile, Cobra can carry 14 rockets and four TOWs apart from 750 rounds of 20 millimetres Gatling rounds. Major Amrose highlighted that since engines have gone old thus all Cobras cannot carry full arsenal, on my question of the techniques which they are using, the answer was vague, they fly at 3000 feet above ground level {AGL} and engage targets once they are told either earlier or through radio in air, but seldom they pick and engage targets at their own, the zooming power of Cobras is about 13 times more than naked eye. It was quite hot and warm.

I moved to Puma with Major Zaheer, this Puma is different from old Pumas, they were initially made for the UAE forces and were given to Pakistan by them. Zaheer briefed me that this model has 300 horsepower more than the old versions and like all pilots he was full of praise about this machine the instruments it has and he also narrated me the one accident which Puma had a couple of years ago at Tarbels where on take off it just sank and hit the ground and spin around but luckily none of the occupant was injured the one fatal casualty was the subedar who was standing outside and was hit by the flying debris of the shear away tail rotor. Meanwhile another helicopter approached a Bell 412 and as it came closer Zaheer said from the approach I can make out it is Major Omar Mehdi Warraich, I have not met Omar for last five years and was excited to see him, by the time he switched off our doors were closed but he came and I stepped out to embrace him it was really very pleasant to see him, he is Cobra pilot and angry young man of his decade.

We took off with major General Ali Abbas who looked like a real field commander with weapon strapped around his thigh, colonel staff and two brigade commanders. I was keen to see the area and as we flew south the area on my right was the Boya Fort and Spin Khaisora where the very first Victoria Cross of Tochi Scouts was awarded, the general lay out of the country is quite a mix one dry river beds, numerous ravines all confluence, mud villages scattered around the banks of these water channels, occasional green patch and then the country start elevating, thin forests, ridge lines with their centuries old tracks, greenery which resembles the area around Desoai plains but with less menacing mountains, if one is not aware of the militant culture of the area then it looks picturesque and a tourist spot, the word little Switzerland comes into mind. The Razmak bowl is a kind of flat surface a bit of plateau but not in true sense because it is surrounded by mountains of gradual slope yet it is more or less like a long wide ridge. The elevation is 6666 feet AGL. It was nostalgic in nature, I recalled Bugles & Tiger of John Masters where he described of Razmak in 1935 it was known as Little London with its building and lay out. All around from the helipad which is there in the middle of the sports ground the view of the valley is

fabulous , on the south is South Waziristan the water channel just below the Razmak is the dividing line between the North & South Waziristan, Cobra and Bell 412 provided the cover by clearing the adjacent heights which in any case are occupied by the army regiments. I was taken to the brigade headquarters of 212, this brigade was in Lahore and came here last year. Another surprise was there Major Afzal who was junior at 5 Squadron Skardu and we served together for well over year and half is the DQ here. He took me in his office and made a number of calls to make sure that my stay here is comfortable arranging for room installing telephones and making sure that I have an attendant to look after me all typical of him, I was feeling embarrassed for all this protocol as I do not deserved any of this, I am not here on official purpose and being retired none of this is authorised to me but this is army culture and more importantly this is how old comrades look after you if you have been fair with them in your official capacity. Major Afzal rang the Commandant shahwal Scouts and informed him that I am course mate of the GOC which he already knew and there fore he should detail a person who should take me around, I wanted to interrupt Afzal over this because it can offend the Commandant but it was too late. Later Major Afzal drove me to the Commandants office en route we made an halt at the view point which is just outside the gate which links the cadet college to the Shawal Rifles. View is good, cadet College has been shifted to Nowshehra and all their accommodation is ow lying vacant or occupied by the army units.

There was a rush of young school boys coming up from the public school which the Rifles are running now. Boys in kameez shalwar light blue in colour shouting and joking with each other and climbing up, I saw young girls among them so the school is co education , girls of seven years of age clad in the light blue kameez shalwar carrying books in a bag and wrapped in a hijab were chatting with the boys, there was a girl in yellow colour shalwar kameez also, it reminds one of childhood, it was very refreshing ang heart warming to see so amny students getting education and this is the single most major contribution of Frontier Corps in resolving the conflict and creating an atmosphere for future.

Commandant Shawal Rifles was very hospitable and courteous he narrated how he is changing the outlook of the setup which sounds quite monotounous as in military almost every one is giving the impression as nothing much was done before him this is again a part of military culture. I was put into the custody of the Subeadr major of the Rifles a Khatak Patahn and another subedar who is now part of the band of the SR.

We four now walked the fourth one was the official photographer of the Rifles , Major Afzal left after making last minute arrangements for my stay. We walked through the narrow streets of the Razmak, on both sides were the old barracks of bygone days. Iron roof tops which are slanted because it snows heavily here, The SM told me that it is unusual to have such a hot day as today otherwise by this time it rains. Fruit laden trees paved footpaths and frequent sign boards indicating where a missile has been hit in recent years almost every tree and every building had the same markings. We first went to the library and I went through the books nothing extraordinary yet I found a magazine Balahisar of 1994 which had an article on Tochi Scouts history. From there we walked down and first saw the military transport shed built in the early days of Razmak , on the other side were isolated huts and long barracks some in living shapes other declared dangerous all had corrugated roof tops, stone walls some plastered but majority left as they were, signs of demolished buildings, area is littered with trees and over all green, the view all around is god air fresh and crisp, the road in pretty good condition with stony footpath and drainage. I was taken to the Ali masjid which was hit by a rocket last year and now under repair, it is imambargah of the Rifles as well. From there we walked to the edge of the fort, the Razmak is not a classic fort rather it has a



boundary wall which has been fortified and height increased and decreased over the years. Now we were in the eastern edge and all huts were in deplorable conditions. Razmak after its glory period remained vacant till 1970 when it was under the Khassadars who were a native force and much of its deterioration took place then mainly because of lack of funds for maintenance. This is any case is the living area of followers the Christian sweeper colony. I inquired about the old Church and I was taken to a hut which had the sign of the Shawal Church with a proper cross and name of pastor as well, I asked the subedar to get the permission for our entrance and we walked in, a heavy dog was having siesta under the tree and two men came out from the huts and I shook hands, the church is not the genuine old rather a new one so I left. The SM told me that it has been renovated by the present commandant and on Christmas Commandant and other officers come here and take food with the Christians, this is not only impressive but heartening also. We reached the barren outskirts of the eastern boundary wall and stood under a tree and just absorbed the area. SM narrated me the rockets that have been fired the last one came yesterday. The band Subedar told me that there used to be a distillery here at the eastern edge, he also said that he once found a gold murti which was taken by the senior many many years ago, he also indicated building rather a hut which was an Hindu Mandir but not any more as there are no more any hindus here.

There is an old post just on the north eastern periphery of the Razmak Garrison, the striking part of it is that it has underground pathway, now there is a road but still the troops use the old path. The SM then took me to show the water supply system of the Razmak, on the way when I pointed out to the old huts and also said that probably more huts were there and have perished, he narrated how just yesterday they found an old grenade of 1936 and also that a year ago they while digging new buildings foundation they found a cache of 260 hand grenades which later were destroyed, the water reservoirs are covered with sheets as they were in pioneer days, there are two water tanks which were clean and water absolutely crystal clear they clean these tanks after every three months, now they have their own tube well but the old water pipe lines are still in working conditions with their old markings, water is drawn from the mountains and drawn over miles. We then drove to rather we first walked to the outer perimeter where they have their firing range, the runway is just within a stone throw distance where a local shepherd was herding his flock of sheep and few cattle, this was the first time since my arrival in Waziristan that I have been outside the fence and was bit apprehensive but SM asked me whether I want to go till the end of runway and I nodded in affirmation and he then told the photographer to go and fetch the vehicle and meanwhile he narrated the life pattern that the Shawal Rifles have gone since 2001.

Initially we were having excellent relations with the natives, The Mahsuds live just close by rather the river or nullah is the boundary, we used to attend their marriages, funerals and invited them on sports functions and other events, we used to shop in the bazar and at Makin the heart of Mahsud which lies just twelve miles south of Razmak rather behind that ridge line in the south he pointed out, in 2005 the relations started deteriorating and it reached its apex in 2007 when no less than 1900 rockets were fired on the Razmak from the adjoining mountains day and night, on eid in 2007 we fasted the whole month with nothing but lentils as there was no supply none had the cigarettes and even we ran out of naswar, on eid we did not have any sweets to celebrate believe me sahib. The people who were working here and living outside in the country side were threatened and many were slaughtered for working in the Scouts, but none of the men deserted except one odd. Meanwhile the double cabin came and he sat on the driving seat and we drove towards the northern end, he further highlighted that these villages on the periphery are friendly these are the summer abode of Wazirs who have started arriving as he indicated a truck at one of the village, these people or the Wazirs are not that hostile as the Mahsuds. The band subedar narrated

how the Premier Bhutto came here in 1974 and landed here at this spot there was a huge gathering of the people and somebody fired in air and then more firing and Scouts in apprehension for his safety wanted to take evasive measures but Bhutto stopped and went to the people and promised them electricity and school and all of sudden the mood of people changed, he was highlighting the effectiveness of a politician in understanding the people, the SM then narrated that how President General Musharraf came few years ago and there was a local Jirga assembled for him and one of the Malik got up and said how I accept that you are the head of state if you cannot provide electricity, incidentally the Bhutto promised was never fulfilled in totality and Musharraf was dumbfounded and it was the governor who got up and said we will provide the electricity and open up hotels provided you guarantee that there will be no fire and weapons will not be carried and malik replied I cannot and governor said till then the president also cannot guarantee the electricity, how far is this true I cannot comment but the point was my initiating the discussion by saying that the political agent and politicians are the best means to combat this menace and these were their comments.

We reached the northern post , a tower like building with iron and steel gates and similar structure protruding out from four corners at mid height to allow the sentries to observe and fire, all around are well dug trenches which were not there in past but have been made now for extra protection. Beyond the northern end where stood a high mountain lies Datta Khel. The post commander took us around and SM pointed out to a large mud complex with iron gate and said this is the house of a nephew or grandson of Faqir of Ipi, it is on the northern edge of the village, the whole village composed of mud compounds and houses was absolutely quiet and there was no movement what so ever, weather fine and air fresh and crispy. We were offered Rooh Afza which was not that cold. It is a different feelings to stand in the Wazirs country knowing fully well that any time a rocket can come from any direction. All the adjoining peaks are under occupation by either army or the Shawal Rifles. SM also showed me the Alexandria Picquet which is there on the northern ridge, he further narrated that they used to walk to Miran Shah on foot and it used to take a day and almost half day to Datta Khel, beyond Alexandria lies Gardei and Dossali posts.

As we were driving back a group of young boys numbering around ten in which two were carrying weapons with long hair and caps were walking across the strip, the SM made me wise by saying that they are friendly but now every one is in the Taliban dress code of long hair with a cap and weapon in hand. I looked at those young men with amazement as one watches lions on a jungle safari not knowing when they will get furious. Later we walked back and I inquired from the SM whether he is living with his family and he nodded in affirmation and I glanced at my watch it was three o clock so I just cut the tour short and despite protests from SM send him forcibly to have lunch with his family and my self went to mess and in my room which was the first one and void of any curtains, ordered a cup of tea and ashtray, the attendant which Major Afzal had detailed came and then I also sent him back to the unit as I really did not need him the mess waiter was enough. After lying down and thinking of John Masters his initial days in the mess also of Major William of Gilgit Rebellion fame, the first ladies which came here in 1935 and things related to them I decided to search the mess and later found that there is no mess library and thus I went for a walk on the clues of the John Masters. I first entered the present governor annexe where the foot prints of two ladies are preserved in a glass covered mosaic with adjacent markings. The corner of this annexe is being pulled down which I later learnt to make room for a monument. Grape vines dry and a neglected lawn yet the cemented marking made for guard of honour and flag post, almost all head of states at least of Pakistan starting from General Zia have been here and

this was the place where some even stayed otherwise the governor used to spent few days of summer here . I ventured towards the rear of the annexe and found a large garden with a tree in the centre the sun room is now a neglected gymnasium but offers a good view of the whole building, probably this is the oldest structure standing with a functional layout. The adjacent rooms which in past were used by the governor's entourage now occupied by 212 Brigade staff have familiar layout with the washroom bulging in the rear with its own door for sweeper, this layout was there at Cherat also and also in Rawalpindi there are also other buildings made of similar design but with concrete stone blocks and thus are of a later date.

Commandant's house is a fine building with brass insignias of the Shawal Rifles on both gates the sentry on the duty was rather suspicious of my taking pictures of the area but remained quite, I went till the end of the street and keenly observed the house on both sides, the house next to commandant is that of the wing commander and the house opposite was without any marking but had a sun room on the top, all the houses have iron sheets sloping, plenty of green trees of all kinds but majority of them are fruit bearing, the street has a white wooden gate at the end and I just sat there to see the vast open spaces , I noticed a plaque on the side wall and I went closer it was a recent one almost three years old marking the inauguration of something by the previous commandant's wife but now it was rather diplayed. In Scouts there is no tradition of any thing being inaugurated by a lady it is absolutely against their customs and this one was some daring lady probably her husband was like majority of army officers too scared to say no to her{ I myself falls into that category}. I walked back introduced myself to the sentry had his picture taken which he readily and with pleasant manners agree, majority of the scouts and rifles soldiers are too happy with camera. I took a different route and went through the lane opposite commandants house, the lonely street had plenty of greenery and huts were white washed the house belonged to the DAA & QMG or in short quartermaster, the round took me back to the mess and I descended down and reached the same library which I visited couple of hours ago.

A lone scout was going and I asked him can he tell the librarian to please come here and he happily nodded, these scouts are a much cordial and cooperative and more efficient than the army chaps that is my personal observation. In the meanwhile I just sat on the side wall and try to absorb the surroundings, what was this building which is information room before, what was behind it, how was the life here almost 75 years ago. In front of me there was a she dog playing with her three puppies and my mind raced back five years ago when at Skardu I had carried out an experiment of rearing a wild puppy which turned out to be a female and gave nine pups after a year and meanwhile I had captured another pup which also grew up and thus after year and half I had almost twenty pups and grown up dogs including many lovers of that first female roaming around my mountainous house. Another scout was taking care of his garden , majority of the scouts at Tochi and here also are fond of gardening and this an excellent way of passing time positively. Meanwhile the same photographer came and said he is in fact looking after the library also. The walls of this soldiers school in which this library is established had quite an array of quotes painted, one deals with the status of mother, other highlighting the importance of education and another giving and highlighting the indication of downfall of man and nations and one of the leading cause was when man will listen and obey his wife more than his parents. I had a good time in the library and found few magazines and books dealing with my research on Tochi Scouts. To avoid drowsiness I had avoided lunch but now I was feeling starved and this was making me drowsy . Another ssoldier came and sat with me and I came to know that photographer had gone to fetch me a cold drink in this state of empty stomach I was in no mood to have a cold drink so I said to this soldier lets go to the café if you have one here and have samosas, which he agreed. I did not had a single penny in my pocket

but I knew in any case he will never let me pay for it. His name was Imran an Afridi from Khyber Agency , we both walked and he narrated me something about the area but in my empty stomach state I was not listening to any thing.

These two scouts were trying their utmost to be as hospitable as they can running around, I was now understanding the proverbial hospitality of patahns and more specifically the scouts. I went with him despite his feeble protests inside the dark café which was frying the samosasa and putting them into a bowl with salad, the other scout the photographer in the meanwhile had grabbed a whole bench for me and I said firmly that I will not sit on the bench rather I took them to the green part of the open lawn in front and sat on the grass, the photographer was in line waiting for the samosas and Imran and I had a conversation. He asked me how many children I do have and hearing that I have to he replied he had four. He then said his younger daughter of ten months has a cardiac problem with a hole in her heart and it is quite depressing but God will be kind. We watched a volleyball game being played in near distance, there were three guns of Shawal Rifles deployed right in front of us, Imran said before this insurgency one required the permission of the inspector general of the corps to fire even a single round but now any observer or soldier can call for artillery fire and when 130 mm gun fires the roof shakes and at debris starts falling. After the samosas which were good the photographer beg leave and myself and Imran had a tour of the area. He pointed to one of the house which ahd red roof and broken walls that this used to be the residence of officers but now the displaced people are living here. Many of the scouts were living in the nearby villages and quite a number of them were slaughtered by the Mahsuds in order to cause the desertion among the scouts but they have failed and commandant has allowed many such families to live inside the camp. Imran also narrated how from 2007 onwards the things went wrong and how now every hut and barrack has a dug out for protection against the falling rockets. I gave my point of view that we are loyal to our constitution and to our regiments and this is our honour. I have found that instead of touching religion the best way is to stay loyal to the constitution of the country and to the regiment which we belonged and this is precisely what was the cardinal or centre of gravity in the British era. We walked for long time going through the hospital which is as it was decades ago and all military hospitals have similar layout, good flower beds and neat and clean walls, patients were playing something which I do not recall now , may be it was badminton. We also went to the auditorium which has the marking of 1932 and Queen Victoria's Own. This is the only building left with any British marking here there is another hut which has the year 1922 written on it. In all military buildings all over the Pakistan the British had the wisdom to write the year of construction with cement in a round circle, it is there at Karachi in army aviation squadron mess and adjoining houses, in Lahore in Peshawar in Quetta every where but it is only at Miran Shah and at Razmak that this aspect over the years has been neglected . There are number of mosques four to be precise here . All over one comes across stray dogs moving around but these dogs are very beautiful typical mountainous and winter bred. Imran told me that these are Powindah's dogs which are off shoots of their parents doings they roam around here and fed upon the cook house left overs and as such are totally harmless. It was pray times so I bid farewell to him and thanked him for his hospitality and reminded him about the books which he had to deliver me in the morning on a loan voucher.

I had a look at the mess lawn and the first thing which caught my eye was the tennis court and the badminton court, it seems that tennis is the official and traditional game of the officers of frontier corps. A row of trees with the plaques in front of them recording the date and person who planted it , the very tree is planted by General Zia Ul Haq in 1978 and next one not in chronological manner was the bearing the name of Qayyum Sher Mahsud the deputy of Frontier Corps, he was my base commander at Multan a fine

senior. I noticed the sentry taking off his shoes in the tennis court he placed his rifle in front of him and then sat down to take off his shoes and offered his prayers. The change of uniform at least in Scouts have failed to undertake the fact that all scouts pray come what may, and with old dress which had only chappals as foot wear it was simple and quick and now these shoes are time consuming and requires the person to sit in order to remove them. Many a times we have failed to understand the cultural aspects in our desire to be modern and western looking, this change of uniform of the scouts is the biggest blunder that has been made in the name of efficiency without taking into account the real facts, the reality is that shoes take more time to wear and take off as compare to the chappals more over they create smell in feet due to socks, chappals on the other hand is local and quick, regarding the efficiency it should not be forgotten that all the natives since British era have been wearing and fighting them with these chappals and they have the battle record to prove the efficiency of these chappals.

Major Afzal as per his promise was there and we sat outside, sorry I have mixed up, I was sitting in the room writing the very first line when came the Colonel Staff Colonel Riaz and we sat for some time, he had spent his youth in the Cadet College Razmak way back in 1980 and now he said I am going to the college to rekindle my old memories, I have started liking his intellect and now I understood why Ali got him on choice with him, I was under the impression that Ali abbass is staying the night in the Razmak and as such made a mental note of taking shower in his suite because in my room there was no warm water and in any case it seems embarrassing to confess to any young officers that I need warm water with Ali it is ok.

I reached the dinning hall at nine sharp one of the few rare times in my life when I have been able to make it in time, the mess is generally okay not as wonderful as Tochi Mess, no old pictures no visitor book no books, few silver items , one tank replica which was very in thing in mid eighties when it was first made and presented to General Zia by the Armoured Corps Centre , a gun replica, an odd dagger the most eye catching item is a brass samovar, the mess it self is in layers with Television room a few steps down, a corridor linked the main ante room to a bigger hall which I believe in actual design was meant to be either a dancing hall or banquet hall. I just mark the steps when Major Afzal came in and informed me that the officers are sitting outside and there they were the colonel staff the brigade major the staff captain and another officer which I learnt later is the deputy commander of the brigade, they all rose and I shook hand and took seat , this is quite an exercise because it is their courtesy that they rise otherwise they are not supposed to do so for a retired officer especially if he is junior to them in retiring rank but then this is what makes Pakistan Army so unique and special , my gratitude to them. Later the brigade commander Brigadier Babar and Commandant Shawal Rifles also join in and after some time Brigadier Babar complained of the chill and we moved inside, I occupied a side sofa and just remained on listening end, the initial conversation among them was regarding the Indian Premier League and Babar was especially praising Dhoni for his innings and the way he hit a Yorker for a six he showed with his wrist movement that how difficult it is to do so, the young ones then came out with all sorts of records and data to show the calibre of Dhoni and the latest rules regarding the teams for reaching finals. It is cricket which is the binding factor between Pakistan and India and also England, it is also the only time and subject on which a junior can differ with a senior in military especially in Pakistan Army. The Commandants of both Tochi and Shawal Scouts are quite a fan of cricket and they have been spreading it to these remote corners as well. The other topic was the forthcoming Volley Ball tournament between the scouts and the army. Mess Havildar came saluted and informed that dinner is ready this is also quite a drill. I thought Ali is taking food in the room unlike of him but I kept quite. The talk on the dinning table was casual and Babar seems

to be well informed about the area, he narrated how he met Bait Ullah Mahsud in 2006 as a lieutenant colonel, I inquired about the physical features of Mahsud and he said that he is around mid thirty , normal height and slim body frame with a beard. Food taste was same as in any army mess. Colonel riazat narrated how when he visited Razmak in 2004 for a college reunion , he saw next to Alexandria Post the big writing on mountains with white lime on stones that Mullah Omar is our leader and Babar agreed and narrated his experience of similar pattern. Babar being a Punjabi has that sublime hate for Mahsuds and for all these tribes who considered themselves invincible, he is not alone in this feeling because almost all Punjabi officers and men have same mind set, I also had the same idea when I was in army and it is only while travelling and living among them that I change my thoughts yet it is difficult for any army personal to think that any one tribe or area can defy the power of military or army. Another issue that was broached on the dinning table in connection with the invincibility of tribes was their history and how they helped British in their rule, Brigadier Babar gave the example of Fort Munro where the treaty of Baloch Sardars with British is preserved in the shape of seven direction figure then somebody puts in the name of Tiwanas and other, I remained silent because to correct the history on a dinning table with a host without having the support of my course mate Major General Ali was fatal. The history which army officers have read and understood or taught is very basic and not analytical rather it is stuff which is published in digests of commercial stuff. I at one time shared the same beliefs but now I see it in different perspective, the tacit support of tribes to British should not be construed as treason rather as part of forward policy further more on the same yard stick almost all of our national heroes falls into similar allegations because they all went to England for education and remained on the pay roll of them as government servants either as lawyers, judges, teachers and military personnals. This crisis of identity are not unusual as all similar nations which have got freedom or so called independence which in any case was nothing more than transfer of power are at odds as to whom they should call traitor and whom as freedom fighter. The easy targets are the tribes especially the Baloch and political big names of Punjab who remained in opposition to Mr Jinnah thus opposing the political thought and policy of Mr Jinnah has become a symbol of treason. The case of Dr Afridi also came under discussion who was sentenced for thirty years for helping Americans to catch Osama, almost all the officers were of the opinion that Americans will take him out. The officers entirely follow what the mind set of the senior is and Babar was anti American anti Benazir Bhutto, I think anti is bit strong he was naïve. This pattern I have seen and have been a part of it where the political ideas of a senior are adopted by the junior officers in these mess talks which in any case are prohibited by army rules but they are there. When a senior officer makes fun of the head of state and the institutions then one can expect little mental grooming of juniors. The proper way is to do so in a professional manner where the ideas and current affairs are dealt in a mature manner but these passing remarks are dangerous. It was only after dinner that I came to know that Ali is staying the night with 11 Frontier Force on the post

Afzal and myself went for a walk we sat at the view point and watched the sky full of stars and the surroundings, the posts all around were well lit and even the tracks leading to them were bright with light it seems as one is sitting in Islamabad and looking at the Minal Restaurant, I do not find any wisdom in so much of brightness because even if any Mahsud who is coming for an attack on these posts can hardly lost his way. Afzal told me that today a Schweizzer helicopter has crashed at Rahwali killing Major Zahid Bari and another student while they were flying over the river Chenab at low level. Later we had a cup of tae in the mess and he further narrated his flying experiences , it was very refreshing to hear and talk about flying after so many years, Major Afzal is one of those pilots who fly by the rules and as

such have survived although we both had narrow misses in the aviation school, he is simple and very efficient.

When I slept I had my wife in my dreams and my children as well. Night was peaceful and no rocket fire. Next day I had a tour of the area with Commandant Colonel..... he took me around and we climbed to the top of the post close to the helipad it is under construction. Commandant is simple and trying to create some kind of history but in that process the real history and heritage of Razmak is getting obscure, he has named the streets and blocks after the pattern of Islamabad thus his office is in F Sector and Mess is in G sector it quite confusing.

Puma came at 1100 hours and before that Ali had arrived in his jeep, very kind of him that he received me with an embrace and stood up; he picked his own small bag over his shoulder and the young officers had looks of admiration. This seems trivial in over all context of military life but in our military culture even these natural things have lot of implication where senior officers seldom carry their own diary even. I intentionally sat in a way to have a view of the area from the different angle then the one which I had while coming towards Razmak. Not much of change in the scenery, barren mountains with green patches mud tracks going and linking the valleys over and through the streams and dry beds of numerous ravines. Population mostly on the dry beds it is clear that at one time it was a flourishing civilisation as long as there was water flowing but now there seems to be scarce cultivation, an odd car running around other than that there seems to be little change in them in all these centuries. Miran Shah itself is the centre of all the communication and trade hub, the town is spread over the wide banks of the Tochi River which is mostly dry.

We arrived and landed safely back to the Miran Shah from where Ali went to his office and I had a talk with Major Zaheer who is flying to Bannu thus I gave him my camera to take aerial pictures of Mir Ali and also that of Miran Shah. I went to the waiting room at the tarmac where there were no less than sixteen aviators, eight from Cobra, two from Puma and rest Mi- 17, the Cobra crew is being changed today and I just sat there listening to their talks and jokes, only one officer Major....knew me then another Major Musharraf came from 4 Squadron my old squadron. I just tried to find old faces among this new cream of army, I could see my old friends and characters among them, in flying cover all they all look same they talk in same language they crack same jokes their cribs are similar to what I have been listening and cribbing my self for two decades, I knew what is going on in their minds. My ears were catching various noises, someone was narrating his solo experience how he got away with the forced landing other explaining to another the intricacies of an altimeter. Like good ole days the flight commander had gone to the division to get the claims signed and now the mission was waiting for him, constant telephone ringing and getting weather, few were talking in Pashto others in urdu mixed with English I just there for an hour enjoying this humming of aviators full of laughter. Lieutenant Colonel Riffat commanding an Azad Kashmir Regiment was sitting next to me and we did not talk a word but then he ran out of cigarettes and I offered him the last one and we started talking, he is from Bunji and I told him about my thesis and luckily he had met few survivors of the 1947 living in his area and we exchanged numbers.

I then went to the Tochi offices on foot and was offered lift by the regimental police riding a motor bike which I gladly accepted, later I briefed Lieutenant Colonel tariq regarding my visit. Major Zamir also came, they are having volley ball tournament or match and he was quite excited about

this . A thunderstorm came in the evening, I just slept and thought about the history . In the late I went to Ali's room sat there for some time and shared his food. Later met Major Zaheer and he narrated the mission which he undertook two days ago when at Peshawar they were informed about the tw casualties at Timurgarh where two soldiers while carrying out mine laying opearaton had accidentally blown themselves thus aviation or Major zaheer planned the mission sitting under the helicopter and by the time they reached the spot it was dark and they had to carryout night flying in the mountains, Zaheer explained that since there is no mountain or obstacles between Malakand and Peshawar thus he was comfortable at 3500 feet other than that he was critical of the way helicopters have been utilised , he disliked the fact that helicopter was used for the dinning out of the colonel staff to fetch the brigade commanders from Razmak, he was appreciative of Ali Abbas that he carried his own bag at Patch Ziarat and commented that this is the way the senior should behave and conduct.

Late at night I took him to Tariq's residence and we had food there, by and large the conversation despite my best efforts still flunges towards the politics and the pathetic situation in which our country is in, the sad part is that this conversation or remarks are without any solid substance and mainly based upon idealism.

#### **Friday. 25<sup>th</sup> May 2012.**

Went to the Political Agents office straight to record office where Amin was sitting there, in the agency offices one comes across men attired in traditional dress with long flowing Pagri and one is reminded of the excitement which early British settlers must have gone through ,presently knowing fully well their tribal past and culture the feeling and apprehension remains the same, in one of these days I am going to approach them sit with them and just listen to their talk which I can understand little bit.

Went for along walk with Havildar Shah towards the north eastern edge of the perimeter towards the College Post, the post commander was a Bhattani who was very hospitable and helpful, we walked towards the last post held by a Afridi Subedar as post commander, I walked out of the gate with him and a guard for few steps, infront is Machis Village, a seminary in front with student boys standing, a mud hut shop and regular flow of one odd car and motorbike. Bullet from a sniper expected anytime yet as an officer although retired I cannot just walk back or show that fear so just stood there and I was watched with same intent by those boys as my dress was different.

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> May.** Brunch in the morning, same taste , Ali gave a little talk to the officers on the professionalism which I apparently think will make no difference at all on any of us.

In the evening went for walk with Major Zaheer and Havildar Shah, it was first opportunity for Zaheer to be so close to the troops and see the town from the post, he got engaged into a theological and idealistic approach and debate with the post wallahs, nothing unusual as almost every one of the officer from army on his first contact and visit or trip thinks that he has the perfect remedy for this problem. The troops need motivation and when you get yourself into a debate of theological substance than it can be harmful for instance Zaheer raised the issue that our constitution is unislamic therefore we must follow the quran and our government is corrupt, I cannot take this beyond this thus I had to interfere and said it firmly that it is Islamic and there is a shariat court and federal court as well, the regimentation is the last word for us and we as soldiesr must only obey the orders and should not think beyond that. The post commander a Turi from Kurram was himself quite philosophical about the end result. One common result which I have



deduced is that almost all are questioning that why army is not striking at the militants, according to Turi subedar it has lowered the standing of army, he also narrated that they are under orders not to interfere with Haqqani group as it is carrying activities inside Afghanistan only. I raised the issue of friendly casualties and tried to make them understood why we are not taking on militants, although I myself is not clear about this yet I cannot let the troops get astray in mindless thoughts about why it is not being done, as soldiers one needs to keep the brain almost empty.

Similar queries in the evening in the mess lawn by young aviators whom I praised for flying Cobra, their point of view was not much different from what I or majority of young aviators had, to think and debate something beyond our rank structures. I had pleasant talk with these young pilots my theme was that state is there to look into the matters and your task is to fly and hunt the militants and this you should enjoy and do not think that what will happen when these Cobras will get old and you there will be no spares.

**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> May.** Met the commandant and gave him a brief and enjoyable talk at his residence, quite regal and majestic yet serene, as he came to see me off at his gate he casually mentioned something about hashish and laughingly said that intelligence here has to be supreme otherwise these people will sell us in the Miranshah bazar. I nodded in agreement.

In the evening I sat outside on a bench and tried to write when Zaheer came, they had gone to Razmak from there to Bannu and Peshawar and back, they have the freedom to travel which we do not, there was a humming noise in the air and Zaheer said it is Drone and I did not know it before and we talked about drone attacks for sometimes. Later at night I saw on television that a drone attack has been carried out at Mir Ali killing four.

**Monday.** 0845 hours. I better start getting ready for PA office, let's see what they have to say about drone attack.

2030 hours. England is just one run short of winning the second test also, cricket is a good pastime much better than watching and listening to the non-stop pessimistic views aired on channels all predicting a collapse of country.

Day was good, at the agency I searched through files and files and found the original border and administrative report of 1896, 1930 and 1942 apart from going through or scanning a whole history of the agency and the frontier region. There are files on the film censorship dating 1952 onwards highlighting long lists of the films available and approved for screening. There are instructions on the censorship giving the exact sentence and scene to be deleted. One example is about a dialogue of Aslam Pervaiz which has been deleted in which he says that 'I do not believe in the god sitting up, he is only god for the rich' in another scene is to be deleted where the camera has shot a heroine purely from her buttocks, in another a bathing scene is deleted. Our media has often been critical of censorship as against the creativity but the hard fact is that media is a pure commercial venture but sole aim of making money irrespective of the cultural consequences, a sentence about god can take thousand lives in a night here in frontier. I also saw the old newspaper of 1953 in which Governor General Ghulam Mohammad is tipped to be the first president after the approval of the constitution, in another news the Pakistani Premier has dubbed that relationships with India cannot be friendly unless the Kashmir and canal water dispute is resolved, at least one issue is solved that of canal water. There were lists of closed holidays to be

observed in 1954 and new year and easter were gazetted close holidays then apart from juma tul widha. In another letter dated 1948 January the correct nomenclature of addressing Quaid I Azam is given in details. In some of the old letters there was one correspondence between the political agent and a firm in Bombay for the purchase of second hand liveries for the poor employees of the agency. There are files on the irrigation and forestry improvement in the agency, an advertisement for special short commission in army, another for recruits with height of five feet six inches with an education of three classes. Petition by the locals for construction of houses and gates. Report on the education standards of the agency there were over two thousand rupees of stipends for the students, there was one student from Miran shah who went to Australia to attend a conference. Hospital works, fines on tribes and their agreements signed with thumb impressions, the 1939 fair in Miran Shah when a merry go around was first introduced and tribes went wild with fun ultimately it broke down due to sheer weight of the men.

I was sitting on the mat scanning the files when a tribal man of around sixty with a beard and heavy turban came in, he was sitting outside when I walk in so I was pleasantly surprised to see him , he had three papers in his hand one original and two photo copies of the same. He spoke in Pashto and handed over the papers to me and I could make out that he wants me to write something on it. It was an application in which this syed was asking for monetary help in lieu of one Kalashnikov and two rifles which he claimed were destroyed on 11<sup>th</sup> May incident in the bazar. I was in a hopeless situation and I called Amin clerk and he came and said that this old man wants you to write favourable remarks on this before he put up to assistan political agent, the old man by virtue of my trouser thought that I am an official and this is what he conveyed me through his Pashto. I wrote one sentence ‘ I do not know this man but I have to write it so please look after him’ and that man shook my hand and gladly went away came back after five minutes and insisting that one line is less I should write three lines and I did, and he walked away gladly .

My laptop is still unable to connect to a wireless connection. In the evening Havildar Shah came with another Havildar and I ordered three cup of tea for all of us. Talk generally moved around Faqir of Ipi and faqir of shewa . I said that present situation is no different from the 1930s and then gave a general run down of the situation then and now with very precise selection of words, my aim was to inculcate the loyalty towards the constitution of the country and presenting this war not as a religious conflict but between those who believe in the rule of constitution and those who does not. Khattak asked me rather painted a scene that if his wife or sister elopes away with another man then he would rather look into the circumstances which permitted this close contact. The tea came in at this precise moment so I was spared the answer. He seems rather educated and bit open minded although he confirmed that he is part of tablighi movement. Coming back to his question I painted another scene , for instance you are going on a journey and the bus meets an accident and your sister, mother, wife or daughter sustains injuries and nearest lady hospital is two hundred miles so what will you do, will you let them die or being operated by a male doctor. I painted another scenario in which mother is suffering from breast cancer and only a male doctor is qualified to carry out the operation. He enjoyed my scenarios and laughed. His next query was regarding the adultery, his point was that there is punishment for forced adultery but now they relaxed the conditions for consensus adultery which in his opinion was and is against the Islamic law. I said that those who made these laws are educated people and thus we must trust them in this case also. Further in my arguments I said rather he came up with the narrative that what about the female slaves of early Islamic era in which sexual contact was made with them and he was wondering whether that falls into adultery and I agreed that it logically is but then the life and laws have taken new dimensions with passage of time,

for instance the slavery is abolished and more than that I show him that where as in the Battle of Ditch the Holy prophet {pbuh} elected to have a ditch we today preferred a wall around the Miran Shah camp because this is what suits us now more than the ditch. Thus in pure classic terms we have deviated from the original Islamic concept of warfare but then this is the liberty given in the religion, he agreed smilingly.

While telling them the historical background of the Tochi Scouts I said few good words about the British Officers ' they were able to command respect because they were also able to read or people of book. This he differed and I reminded him that when Muslims were being persecuted then it was King of Abyssinia Najashi who gave asylum to Muslims so how can we as a nation forget their kindness , it is against the culture of tribal society, he enjoyed this example the most. He narrated an event where in one of the books he had read that some religious scholar mentioned that if you even touch a woman then your wazoo is broken and in next breath he said that where as another religious scholar has objected to this by highlighting that in case if you touch a woman who is holding a child and you are picking that child say from your sister and so on.

Later he remarked that almost seventy percent of people of England are atheist and they have no moral values. I gave him personal example of my stay in the Glasgow University where I saw huge crowds of people attending the church, I told him that I have been regular visitor to the Church & Gurdwara, I explained the concept of nuns and he asked me why they are called sisters and what is the difference between them and the sisters of hospital. I narrated him how the soldiers till 1850 had no proper medical look after in the field and many died due to poor medical and sanitation conditions , the Florence Nightingale worked for them and this is how the Red Cross started. I further highlighted that look at the sisters or the nurses working in hospital looking after our parents and children washing them dressing them giving them medicine which in majority of the cases even we may be unable to do so there fore out of sheer respect for their noble work they are called sisters. Naik Khattak asked me when I came back from America and I replied just few months ago, he was inquisitive about the security check in which women has to go through a scanner and termed it a violation of modesty. I narrated him an incident how a woman in hijab was checked by American female police and why it is necessary for security, right here in this Miran shah in 1919 a gang of six men were able to over power the sentry by pretending two of them as women clad in burqa, I further said that 'will you allow a women wearing a veil and totally covered in burqa to enter the Miran Shah complex from civil gate and he said no. My point was that security is not a violation of modesty or a religious beliefs but a necessity of time, and it is only the present time which has made us realised that we cannot allow a woman without scanning. His other query was regarding whether in foreign countries Muslims are allowed to built mosques and I said yes , in United Kingdom the number of mosques in 1947 were fifteen and now over three hundred as far as France is concerned it may be different but in England and America Muslims have complete religious independence as much as we have in Kurram Agency where every day there is some incident of religious instigation and entry of certain religious preachers is banned from time to time.

Khattak & Shah enjoyed this discussion and after some times we bid farewell . Now at this time there is a dinner going on in the Mess by the divisional staff , I do not know the occasion but since my course mate Ali Abbas is not here , he has gone to Peshawar to attend the promotion board so I have not been invited. Today I asked about Laiq shah a prominent historian of the area who has written a voluminous book on Waziristan in Pashto, I had this book with for last two weeks and was thinking to

call him because he lives in the city but when I inquired in the agency office, the Clerk Amin after asking from his next seat clerk duly informed me that Laiq Shah died two weeks ago.

**Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2012. 2315 hours**

The power is off but generator is on, tonight aviators gave a dinner in which they invited Tochi Commandant and wing commander apart from assistant political agent so was I, in fact I gave this proposal to Major Zaheer last week to interact with the divisional staff and Tochi scouts reason being that I never saw any aviator not even the flight commander being invited on any party which to me is quite strange because an aviator is the one officer whom the whole division should know and whose coordination and participation is vital for the success of any operation. While writing the Royal Air observation Post I after going again and again through the draft realised that pilots ego and way of working is different and he either is too extrovert or too introvert depending upon his flying grooming thus he has to be approached and then he will mix up with the officers, all my commanding officers especially Lieutenant Colonel Azam always used to stress that as a pilot one must go and meet all the divisional staff so it was passing on that to new generation. Good food especially the sweet dish Rabri excellent. Green tea under a starlit night with humming noise of drones flying overhead ends the day.

My day at political agency was good went through certain old files. The government officials in 1933 were not allowed to attend any farewell entertainment without permission from deputy commissioner. In 1961 Niaz Ali Khan the nephew of famous faqir of Ipi was the medium of conduct and contact between the political agent and the tribes thus he was on the payroll of the government to counter the Afghan propaganda for Pakhtoonistan, he was supplied with money and propaganda material apart from rations to woo the tribes. In June 1961 the government imposed duty on timber and tribes threatened to assemble at Razmak on 1<sup>st</sup> July and on 30<sup>th</sup> June government took back the decision and averted a fight, thus political solution remains the best way to ensure peace here. In 1960-61 census the population of Wazir Tribe was 91239, Daur 58328 and Saidgi 5040. Wazir have three main sections namely Ibrahim Khel, Wali Khel and Mohmit Khel. The Ibrahim Khel has three sub divisions namely Madda Khel settled in Datta Khel where the area is known as Madda Khel even on map. Manzai Khel they reside in Kanirogha, Mannirogh, in summer they migrate to Shuidar and Mazdak, Shuidar is the area abeam the runway at Razmak. The third subsection is Tori Khel the hardest and most turbulent they live in lower portion of Khaisora valley upto Kaikowan at the south of Shaktu and aroundabout MirAli and Sherstallah plains they also migrate to Razmak in summer.

Daur they live along the banks of the River Tochi they are regarded as the most advanced tribe mainly agriculturist, their area is from Pai Khel to Khajauri except the Hamzoni area which is the name given to tribes occupying the area between Boya and Darpa Khel. Saidgi are not to be taken seriously the old men who met me yesterday asking to write something on his application was a Saidgi.

Another observation about the litigation is that Wazirs seldom settle their scores through litigation rather they do it in their own way but Daur are quite into litigation system, generally Wazirs are poor and Daur are rich, the original owner of the fertile lands were Wazirs who sold their land to Daur and later it were Daur who were robbed and attacked by the Wazirs thus they the Daur asked for British protection this is how the British were able to make an ingress here. Powindahs in 1960 were stopped from entering into Pakistan for the reason that their presence would increase the price of basic commodity at Miran Shah the simple equation of supply and demand as a result the files indicate that many Powindahs

lost their lives due to harsh weather in Laghari Wara area near Miran Shah. Electricity came to Miran shah in 1961 and it was hoped that it will hasten the speed of civilisation . There were four civil hospitals twelve dispensaries and four veterinary hospitals in the agency apart from five Tochi Scouts hospitals at Miran Shah , Boya, Mir Ali, Khajauri and Spinwam. 6100 animals were treated in the year, there was one donkey stallion, one stud stallion and ten stud bulls and 119 rams studs in the agency. The rams won second and third prize in the national horse and cattle show . In 1960-61 under the basic democracy there were ten members elected from Miran Shah and six from Mir Ali. Malik Jahangir Khan a Wazir from Madda Khel was elected for provincial assembly and Malik Daryaa Khan a Wazir Tori Khel for national assembly but he is from South Waziristan, the Daur member Subedar Akbar Khan's papers were rejected thus the honour of being the pioneer parliamentarians goes to these tribal leaders. The movies that were not given censor certificate in the year included Expresso bongo, La Viertie, David & Goliath, Town without pity, Girl Fever, Baghdad after midnight; majority for nudity and some of the urdu films were based upon their socialist dialogues and other on religious reasons like the Private lives of Adam & Eve.

I later left the office and went to Tochi Scouts offices had cup of tea rather juice with Commandant he is always very courteous. Later had a nap in which I remembered my children when they were toddlers nad I could hear their voices.

In the evening went for a walk with Major Zaheer and talked about Osama, Shakeel Afridi and NATO supply routes, he generally agreed with my observation that in army the officers by and large do not think logically about these events rather they go with the mind set of the senior, I in my arguments highlighted that if only the foreign office is left to decide these issues then they can always get a good bargain but there is always a solution to all present issues but only if tackled logically and not emotionally. Osama bin Laden raid was no doubt a violation of our sovereignty but before that we were so goody good with the American having lunches and dinner parties and giving away presents on farewell which Zaheer agreed and added that yes same was the pattern at Tarbela , so where we or our relations went wrong, the answer lies in Osama, but we have acted as Osama was not our enemy rather a friend, if American did not shared the information then purely from military mind one can accept the logic because even in army at times data is not shared with others so in the end the operation proved successful. To my mind we should have stick with the idea and propaganda that we have provided the information and have helped in making it successful and in lieu cash the good deeds because in the end it is the commercial gains which matter. Now the hard reality is that liberals and moderates have lost or are on the run and hardliners are dictating the foreign policy because no one is allowed or is even willing to put forward the other side of the story and there are always two side of a coin. Here we are now in an economic mess because we cannot afford the cost of these military operations which in any case are being conducted as a result of Osama hunt. Today none is remembering General Musharaff but only few years ago there was none to say any word contrary to his policies thus army as a thumb rule simply follows the line of the chief which is a good thing and it should be like this but then chief is bound to follow the political leadership which he seldom does. General Aslam Beg in 1990 Gulf War went against the policy of Nawaz Shariff and resultantly every coalition partner got its loan written off except Pakistan. The world also works and live the same way the way these tribes are living, Daurs were weak so they called in the support of the Government, Wazirs as a whole are not that hostile but if one clans commit a crime then the others looks after their own interest first.

Visited the Pakistan Air Force radar setup within Miran Shah a MPDR 45 type, the weather hot and the corporal who took us inside had to first vacate the radar because four other air force soldiers were lying on a mat playing cards with air-conditioned on and chairs being kept out. They showed us the screen and there were six drones in the air and he said at night the strength increase to even twelve, now this is something strange on one hand military especially the army is shrieking about these drones but on the other hand own air force is silent about these, thus this is creating confusion among masses and the political government has to bear the brunt of these allegations from so called patriots. Visited 149 artillery regiment and got the briefing on their deployment, they are moving to Bahawalpur after a stay of two years here. The two young officers Capatin Adeel and the other whose name I am forgetting now explained how they have devised new and practical methods to conduct shoots here, I appreciated their work and narrated how my generation saw the Afghan War but certainly yours is more lucky to have such a wonderful combat experience here. It is times like this which actually makes a regiment an regiment in pure sense. Men and officers sharing the hardships and good times the ever constant threat and fear of Wazirs is something which removes all kind of laxity and casualness among the officers and troops. It is easy to talk in mess lawn with a cup of tea about war but this is reality the first real war that this army has fought since birth, in which there is no Geneva Convention to bank upon no mercy from the opponent and no conspiracy theories for failure although America remains the easy scapegoat for any eventually.

After dinner no few words about the dinner itself, the Commandant is an icon of courtesy at least for me and I am getting deeper and deeper into debt of paying back to Tochi Scouts and this is a worry matter for me. He is naïve about aviation and as such he was inquisitive about how the helicopters work and there was no dearth of technical flow of knowledge from aviators especially Major Zaheer, the discussion ranged to Osama and wisely I remained silent and on listening end, as a thumb rule a retired officer should avoid making any comment which are contrary to the expression of a senior especially in front of juniors on topics like this. I appreciated the sweet dish and after dinner when again discussion went on to lament the social fibre of the country I just gave facts and figures which shows that our education standards has improved in last decade, I highlighted the fact that in 1953 a boy from Miran Shah went to Australia for a study tour .

Tomorrow Major zaheer has given me an offer to fly with them towards data Khel and Boya area they are taking some mineral research team there lets hope I can make it in time for it.

**31st May2012,1505 hours.**

I did not went with Zaheer yesterday because I slept and I cursed myself all day for this lapse, he in any case went and then flew to Razmak to pick up casualties that occurred due to IED. I spent the day reading old books and typing.

Today I have changed my guest room now I am in number four, I did not slept all night because in the morning the Tochi School had its parents day and I did not wanted to miss it due to sleep. The days of my life when I have been able to make good in time are rare and everytime I curse myself for missing the innocent beauty of early day. I sat out on bench and just stare at the grass the birds fluttering around few pigeons roaming scot free, a pair of mallet were running inside cage which is good enough for their sprint and cross country races. The voices of the birds in this part of ady were given the background

music by a thumping generator but it was just the background base but otherwise these various kinds of birds chat so much among themselves that one feels like sitting in a Scottish pub on a week end night. I do not remember their names and types but they were everyday type of birds only more palyfull.

Later I walked to the school for which I took the path behind the mess which follows in front of commandant house and then after twenty paces turns left and then right , in front of the mud barracks and onto the main avenue of fort where you take a right turn and walk almost a hundred paces or less and you are out of the fort, this is the original path which runs in a longitudinal manner, there are two such paths the other is almost parallel to it but with a gap of hundred paces , the hospital is located on that path. The path which I have just followed was the RAF path and their area, the present commandant house was the pilots mess in 1923. This seems to be the extension of the original mud fort of Militia in from 1900 onwards.

There was guard on the gates of the school there were two boys with arm band receiving the guests, I had a chat with them, last time I had such an occasion was at Aitchison College Lahore as an teacher and house master. I was met by the Naik Khattak the one who came to my room few days back, shook hands with him and other teachers and sat in the principal office which was the waiting and control room also. A native boy with a bouquet of flowers was sitting there , I said hello and he was studying in class three the other boy was almost double his age was in class one. I did not asked any question over this as this is how it works here, at times the parents realise quite late that after all there is nothing wrong in education. Meanwhile a girl of eight years old entered confidently she was in blue kurta and white shalwar with a scarf which she very smartly kept on taking care. She or Kashf as her name is charming and beautiful, I was keen to see the native children as how they looks like and what they think. I said hello to her and asked the usual question about her class, she replied and telephone rang which the boy answered and another teacher entered and then moulvi sahib. I kept my conversation with her but it was difficult so I invited her to sit on next to me. She had a lovely voice and what I pleasure it is to hear urdu from a Waziri girl it is similar to a Scottish girl speaking English. She is in class three, likes mathematics as nothing is difficult you only have to work hard. I was in a trance I was fulfilling my quench of love which I have for my own daughter. She did not like to paint she answered on my question , but why ? inquired , sir, she answered me all the time by the prefix of sir, I made one but when I tried to rub it the paper was torn so I left it. Who is your best friend was my next query, she name a girl who is studying in class fifth. How many girls are in your class I asked, only myself came the reply. I was baffled but kept quite. I saw you other day in the colony, she said. Oh the day they were playing football I replied and feeling a bit important now , no the cricket she replied. You like cricket , no came the reply. All her sentences starts with sir and had the imperfect grammar which was making it a treat to listen. I told her that I saw two girls playing outside their houses on that day and Kashf said , she must be my sister. Now it is against the manners to ask a child what her father does and how many brothers and sisters she have. I cannot speak Pashto I confessed to her, what you can speak Pashto she was surprised, you are better off than me as you can talk in urdu I said. I do not exactly recall but I asked her whether her brother is also studying here or something like that and she said as amatter of afct that I do not have any brother but we are six sisters. Now it was my turn to get surprise but I took it as matter of afct as she was taking it. Do you have any younger sister and she said she had three, I hope they are not teasing you, no no they are lovely but sometimes I get angry with them. I am sure your elder sisters also get angry with you , no they are lovely too. My elder sister is studying in Bannu and when ever we go there she gets sad when we leave. Do you watch television , sometimes but the other day storm got our dish down and we have only

one channel. My father works very hard, he goes to office then comes back have his food and prayers and then goes back to work, I write one page and my hand gets tired but he writes and writes but never gets tired even now he must be working. It was time to leave but I had fallen in love with this charming little princesses I wish that she keeps on talking and I keep on listening , in her I was talking to my daughter.

The programme itself quiet enjoyable and thought provoking, the boys recited quite a couplets from Iqbal in peculiar Pashto accent which makes it even more enjoyable. A welcome speech in Urdu and then in English, few skits the most impressive was the one which five girls presented. It is hard to believe that here in Miran Shah the heart of insurgency there is this school where the girls are studying with boys although they numbered only seven odd now. This is the first line of defence against illiteracy and extremism, had there been no Tochi Scouts School then all of these students were potential suicide bombers and even now there are half a dozen seminaries running around the town producing minds devoid of thinking anything else but only one dimension of life.

There were generous gifts for almost everyone for every position they gave almost two gifts and through this they have won the hearts and minds of the people, this is why militia and scouts are the most important key players in turning the tide of violence. Commandant Colonel Wajahat was sitting next to me rather it is the other way around and he whispered that I should also give gifts and awards but I regretted, kind of him. Later he spoke about the school, Tochi Scouts is running the school purely on its own resources, over 500 students are paying nominal fees and boarding is almost free on top of all this almost twenty orphan children are getting free education and messing, hearing and witnessing all this makes any Pakistani proud .

Major Zaheer has left and Lieutenant Colonel Salahuddin is the new crew of Puma, last time I saw him he was young and so was i. He has been to United Arab Emirates for training and getting instructor rating on the Puma. Later Brigadier Khalil Dar also came in he has not yet taken over the command of Qasim Base. Myself and Dar has quite a long association mainly revolving around history , military history and adventure. His wife happens to be the very first teacher of my son Salik in Quetta. Dar was commanding officer of the 9 Squadron at Peshawar in 2002 and later remained in Military Operations Directorate dealing with the area and as such is an eye witness of all that is happening now. He is also the very first officer whom I have met at least here who is logical in understanding the present scenario and does not believe in any conspiracy theories thus it was quite educative. The 7 Division actually came here in 2004 mainly for the reason of ensuring non intervention by the tribes in the Afghan election of Hamid Karzai, they then got stuck here like British. Another brigade 217 probably has arrived from Kharian and if I go by the history then similar pattern was adopted by the British in 1920 when units and regiments came from plains of Punjab on emergency without any prior training of hill warfare and suffered badly. Later British opened up special Frontier Warfare schools at three places in India, Abbottabad was also one such place. The difference between the Frontier Corps or Tochi Scouts and army is starking in this area, in the morning the Tochi Scouts were able to show their support for the locals and vice versa, for army there is no such opportunity but in near future there will be many . Brigadier Dar also made a point to write an account of the war, his one point needs attention , he highlighted that for long we have been admitting and presenting with pride the fact that local manufacturing of weapons is of very high standards and wonders where that weaponry is going now. He termed the relation ship between army and locals as superfluous , army does not need permission and



good will of locals to move about on road and the day army is able to dominate the bazar and surrounding areas that will be the first sign of victory; I agree with him.

2100 hours. There is a dinner of 7 Division about to start, I have not been invited, you never know all of sudden Colonel Staff remembers; I am comfortable here but I am missing sweet dish of rabri. General Ali is back but I have not been able to call on him, his presence is certainly a source of comfort , I have to give him the cheque.

### **1955 hours, 15<sup>th</sup> of Moon**

Sitting in the mess lawn enjoying a glass of cold lemonade and listening to the chirping voices of multiple birds , few seconds ago a crow was yelling I am not sure whether he was male asking for food or the female cutting crow's ego by highlighting that is this all you have earned today. In the far distant two romantic sounds of newly wed couple birds, then a more romantic voice of some one bidding good night to each other, another one lamenting the destiny for getting stuck up with lousy bird like you on such a lousy part of tree. These are free birds and there are birds in the cage which have no worry, they get best food and living environment, neat and clean nest, a man paid by the state looks after them , who is better off then the free ones struggling to make a nest of their own all the time living in a persistent danger of being shot by a friendly or wayward shell or the ones in the confinement. Same is the case of human . Living inside the fort is like the birds in a cage.

I have finished my glass of chilled lemonade, it is something very traditional to military messes, a glass or jug of it while sitting in the lawn is a perfect end to a day, only the mosquitoes are the irritant. This mess is apparently home to bats and ababeel, they fly very low and fast just like new pilots. There is silence except the that bird couple which is still fighting over petty issue. No moon so far , yesterday it was full moon and where I am sitting the angle was good because by this time the moon would be peeping through the lone tree astride the main mess entrance , however if I change my position and go back few steps and sit on the bench then it was high up, at midnight when I came out of my room and sat at the bench to stare at him, he was high and lone , its glowing golden light and corona had engulfed the whole sky diminishing the stars. I stared it for long and through him I had a glance through my own life, I recalled when I saw it in Thailand on a far island in 1989, then the Skardu, Siachin, K-2 , Glasgow , Harrisonburg, Sargodha. So many people rather to be specific so many women associated with it, where are they now.

### **Boya Days**

Nothing very exciting has happened in last few days and I am getting rather feeling embarrass for being here because the same queries by so many officers, where is your family, don't you miss them, what you do for living, when are you going home, are you still here, I hope you are staying till next week. And so on. I just smiles back as long as Colonel Wajahat is not asking me this kind of questions everything is fine.

I did not had a good sleep rather nothing, there was a constant rattling of machine gun fire which started around 0140 hours, its sound while sitting in the room sounds quite pleasant, there was a long burst then a small burst and then single round fire which I think the soldier was enjoying doing so. It is a routine

matter on Saturday nights, see how it differs from the Saturday nights at Glasgow university club. The reason for firing on Saturday is that since Sunday is a road operating day thus the miscreants normally try to plant improvised explosive devices {IED} or lay ambush thus any movement seen at night is fired to keep the roads safe. It happened last Saturday as well and the intensity was more than today. However today or tonight my worry was that this may be an indication of something more drastic on Sunday. I could hear the telephonic rumbling of Ali Abbas. I have no idea at what time I dozed off but I was up at 0600 hours because I had opted to go for Boya, small fort close to Datta Khel near Durand Line with the road convoy.

Had two glasses of lemonade and then again slept and awoke for umpteen times. I was not knowing at what time the convoy leaves, received a call from the NCO of 5 Wing which is located at Boya to inform me that the convoy will be leaving soon. I packed my stuff rather Afsar Khan had already done that. I wrote a note for Commandant which he is interested in having a historic note on the wall. Before leaving I wrote a note for Ali Abbas thanking him for lending me the laptop and also warning him that his laptop is no more an innocent and pious laptop rather I have taken him through a tour of dark alleys of the world so he better be careful. The vehicle was a single cabin Toyota the Scouts came to pick up my ruck sack but I carried it myself, in the vehicle was one rocket launcher, one machine gun and two more scouts with SMG's. The dilemma was that they all were wearing the bullet proof jacket and helmet and I was unarmed and had no such armour protection, wearing my bush jacket and felt hat. I felt vulnerable and truly understood the meaning of phrase unarmed into battle which was the title of official history of air observation post. Once the vehicle moved and left the Northern Gate and took right turn covered a distance of hundred yards and at the western gate there was traffic jam yes a traffic jam, because a convoy from Bannu has just arrived and its military trucks were anxious to make way. It looks like a Baddami Bagh Bus Stand with trucks crawling, few civilian trucks standing on one side and my driver keen to make his way through the chaos, military police was apparently helpless in this situation this was obnoxious, I told the driver how vulnerable we are now, a single rocket from Taliban can play hell with us. We moved forward and there were further scenes of chaos, a soldier bending with a sack on his back, another throwing a last moment water bottle to the truck, few soldiers laughing majority silent with anticipation of future so was I. Over all the army discipline was poor in this matter no officer seen around. Finally we left the protective umbrella and came out on the open road, the very corner which I saw first time from the fort where a woman was wearing a bright coloured shirt and I had wondered who are these people now I was among them.

The road operating day is quite elaborate and what I have gathered from all the meetings and talk the gist is as under. A curfew is imposed in the city and in the area as well none is allowed to come out of the house and anyone seen is shot. Picquets are placed which are scouts who occupy the important key points with their vehicles and soldiers placed who normally stand behind a cover. In terms of Miran shah for instance Captain Hammad & Hamza would occupy the two petrol stations at the eastern and western end. A bomb disposal team in which a soldier from engineers walk on foot and physically clear the area he has another vehicle behind him carrying jammers on board, on suspect another soldier wearing a suit carry out disarming of the explosives, hats off to this leading soldier he has nerves of a lion to do all this. The IED's are placed in different manners. These IED's are made of urea the one used as fertilizers for crops, it is boiled and the segments left in the base are then made compact with flour and then bolts nuts nails are placed along with a circuit which is either timed or through remote control or by pressure. So it is very easy to make very lethal in nature and can be placed either by digging the road or in a shopping

bag placed innocuously. On every ROD there are incidents of IED blasting and casualty. Last week one blast took place at Bannu where IED was placed in a wall, in Razmak area one was planted in a tree. The one at Bannu was a master piece because the Taliban had challenged that they are placing one and you will not be able to locate it. The transmission of army and Taliban is intercepted by both as both are transmitting in air. The talibans interception are often quite amusing in which they will brush off the artillery fire as non effective. I knew about this procedure only in detail yesterday and now my eyes were on the road trying to find any shopping bag.

We crossed the bridge and were on our way to Boya, driver was driving as he is in a formula race and was duly admonished by the scouts standing in the rear to slow down a bit, now this vehicle became the leading vehicle and I got further worried because now we will be the first target. Road was good with occasional humps, speed breakers and pot holes all potential sites of IED's my breath was slow and so was heart beat. All around the area is full of ambush sites, on my right till Boya the mountains covers the site and on left the Tochi River with green patch in between the road and the dry river bed. The very first village is... a mud cluster of houses with towers we passed through the village and any one can hit us. I saw small children playing and watching us through the walls they waved to us and so did I, a bit of tension was eased. I started conversation with the driver he is Yousafzai from Mardan area. He asked about myself and I replied back. I have worked for an actress as a driver in Lahores. Now this changed the whole spectrum of this fearful journey. He also said that he had driven a van for a mohajir in Karachi but then situation came to a point where that mohajir said to him that in case if you are taken away by the Mohajirs I would not be able to help so in other cases it's better if you leave.

We crossed another speed breaker and my mind said now let's give up in calculating where all IEDs can be planted because every place is full of these sites. There were shopping bags, there was an old woman walking with two donkeys, children playing in the field, waving, a man lying on a charpoy under a tree. All shops were closed, all gates were closed, there was another picquet two jeeps and soldiers standing, one odd sitting carrying water cooler and again I thought of water bottle. There was a soldier standing with flag but flag was in a bad condition.

Tochi River runs parallel and on both sides are mud villages of small size, some of the compounds were huge with towers, one had a tower almost like military tower. Trees of all kinds and almost invariably all are fruit trees. The water channels running, the primitive hand well in the open gives the look of most primitive era. Scenery invariably draws a comparison to travelling in extreme north in Karakorums and Himalayas. From Skardu towards Shigar and towards Ashkole. Here the river bed is full of stones another evidence of glaciated era. On the other side which is almost 5 kilometers or slightly less the scene is similar green oasis and mud huts. At no stage the river width narrows down to an extent that you can wave to one another. On the road we zigged zagged. A graveyard with old stony graves one had a flag fluttering around most probably a recent grave of a Talib who had died fighting. There was an advertisement for a school in which the most economical education is imparted. All signs were in Urdu. Another picquet and then we stopped to drop and pick someone a soldier. I was just thinking about our vulnerability/ Driver asked me if I would like to stretch and I said no I am fine but I insisted and came out in open. Took a few steps in front was the Tochi River and the mud town of Boya. From this point a track diverged towards Gharlamai and for Afghanistan and also the town of Dezgan the stronghold of Taliban. The old bridge runs parallel but in broken conditions. The valley narrows down like a funnel/ All green I was briefed about all the posts on the peaks. We sat and drove crossed the bridge and took

right turn , now river comes on our right there is water in it but not much but what is there is clean and fresh. The bed cannot be crossed without a bridge. I wondered why the advancing parties do not walk through the centre of Tochi River it is bit rough but it is safest because you cannot be ambushed. Boya fort has two walls one outer inside which is quite a large ground in which family quarters are also there and then an inner cordon where 1954 is written on the top it was burnt down in 1947 when military and scouts withdrew and then reoccupied in 1948. Brick built in 1957. Met all the scouts shook hand and guided through a narrow alley when Capatin hammad came out , he had reached earlier. The residence is very comfortable cool neat and well decorated. Wing commander and his family had left in the morning convoy and hats off to thee military wives for braving such risks when even mal eofficers are very reluctant to even come to Miran Sha even for a night stay and here these women and children have come out as far as Boya.

House is elongated with a verandah in front which is made flyproof with a small rather reasonable lawn in front, cricket bats and badminton rackets were placed in oone corner. There are two rooms on each side of a hall with comapartively high roofs which is wooden. First room on the left is in disposal of hammad, the opposite room being locjked as it must be the wing commander's personal room, then another room on left which is television set and leather sofa set with table. Mine is opposite to it a small room with one window, a wooden almirah, a wooden bed two side tables two wooden sofas and two plastic chairs anda plastic centre table, an attached bath with blue tiles. From the window the onley scene is of that Musa Khan Post.

There is another lawn in the rear with vegetables, a cat sleeping lazily but gave me a stare, few pigeons fluttering around. Later we both were invited for tea and chicken roast with Mountain Dew cold drink, I hate this drink but had to swallow it down. We both came and sat in lawn and Hammad narrated how he won the first prise in military debates at Risalpur. The time he was conducting officer with Turkish delegation at Karachi with Natasha & Salima both lieutenants in Turkish navy, the very scene when a lieutenant colonel came to meet these lieutenants after a day of flirting wearing tuxedo and that too with a hat which he took off at the table with a style' my ladies I am here and then sat down took a cigar from his pocket and smoke'. Later we all yungsters used to go to him always complimenting him on his dress code and he would be flattered and ordering the special tea breaks and in the end we would get the job done. One time our commanding officer and commanding officer of another signal unit had somewhat bad relations adting back to the sports match that took place between their units when both were adjutants and now they revived the rivalry to an extent that both almost punched each other during a match between their regiments, we were ordered not to dine with the opposing unit and neither to have any social contacts with them.

At night we watched the French Open finls between Nadal & Dojovick, Hammad is a keen follower and good player himself, we had the dinner and went to bed early, this is the beauty of Boya.

Monday 0900 Hours.

Having a cup of tea which is cold and I have just requested the Mamun the attendant to get it warm, none of his fault because I told him twenty minutes ago and then I went out to have a look at the fort wearing khaki shorts white shirt and chappals the old Scouts dress. The fort is small, the old fort which was built in 1906 onwards was burnt in 1947 and the post was vacated, it was reoccupied in 1957 and rebuilt, in 1958 it was attacked by the tribal lashkar in which one of the Subeadr of Tochi Scouts was

awarded SJ and again in 1966 another SJ was awarded, but very little is known about these operations even in Tochi Scouts and one of the chief reason for coming here is to see first hand the area and to know about those operations through oral history. I have requested the SM to locate the old people in the village and in the morning he said he will do so and there are men over 80 years of age. Canteen is small and a kind of subsidiary of the main canteen at Miran Shah. Hamad is a very good company, he is captain with just three years of service he was promoted captain in March. So I am living a subaltern life through him, he is still asleep.

Around Boya, and Boya is a small valley the ground opens up here like a broad funnel and then closes down. The surrounding peaks are all having Scouts posts, for instance The Musa Khan post is overlooking Boya from North and Zomani Post from South. On my query that how you supply water to them the procedure is that 14 men are living there and every morning a team of two donkeys take the water carriers and follow a track, along that track there are small posts for protection also, the men come down daily for taking a shower in the river which is between the Boya Fort and the hill on which Mus Khan Post is located. The post is quite high and provides cover to the Boya Fort in case Fort is over run or comes under fire. It was built during British Era. The Oral History narrates that Musa Khan was a shepherd and post is named after him it needs further elaboration.

Weather is hot but there is air in the air which makes it pleasant. The house in which we are living is the residence of Wing Commander and is nicely decorated and comfortable. Washrooms are tiled and floors carpeted, there are two lawns one in front and other in back, there are no less than three dish receivers and power supply is for few hours in which I recharge my lap top as well. Over all area is dusty, there is a detachment of air defence also here with four Shoulder fired SAMs all reaction of Salala Check Post. The usual squadron of pigeons is also present and are carrying out their routine flights. The odd cock is also loitering around.

1500 hours. Wind is blowing strong outside from the window I can see the north in front of my eyes there is a tree and in high distance The Musa Khan Post, a wall intervenes which was built by last wing commander Lt Col Gulam Hussain before that it was all open and only the original fort built in 1957 stood. This fort is not the original fort built in 1905 a mud cladded compound with watch towers, the one which I mentioned on the track or road coming from miran shah. It gives help in reducing the time of rescue. Anyway I went to the tehsil office which is another mudcladded compound. With me was the subedar Riaz a Waziri and WHM we walked to the gate of own fort and I thought that it is the first time I will be going out, lets see it is too late and too absurd to think now, I had no weapon but I was wearing the white kameez shalwar and chappals. In the morning I walked around the fort in traditional summer dress of scouts which was khaki shorts and chappals with white shirt, Subedar Riaz whom I met along with Subedar major near canteen and I mentioned about going for the tehsil and he just telling him in Pashto about me. Subedar Riaz did mention in Pashto towards my dress and I told him that I will change. Now we three were walking towards the gate, Riaz told me that old tower on the side was tehsil office till 1992, there was no boundary wall where the cricket pitch and volley ball court are now, there were colourful graffiti on the walls which are there for the children because no less than thirteen families live here, officer's being the lone exception rest all of scouts. There are see saw and swing along with marry go around, there were air defence soldiers also with missiles, scouts with machine guns, all very aesthetic; On the walls the name of shaheeds are there with a brief description of the individual, Riaz told me that they have written the name of school the deceased attended. All done by previous wing commander. The

last sentry shook hand wearing red barret and out we came. I stepped out first not knowing what to expect, what a feeling to step out into a new world.

A road with the gradual mountain slope and bushes all dry. No need to even look right and left while crossing the road but I did out of habit; picked in Glasgow and Harrisonburg. On my left a motor bike approached with men faces covered with scarf to cut off the heat and carrying AK-47. I froze for eternity to see what happens, it had a bad cylinder and bursted near me and passed by the last one making an eye contact for last moment. Riaz was now near me and we crossed now I was walking astride the road when the second motorbike went. I had a full contact with the second passenger who had the barrel pointed towards us and passed by.. In the end of road is Afghanistan, Riaz said, how far I inquired. First Khar Kamar then Datta Khel and then border say around 60 kilometers, which was wrong its not more than twenty. A kind of hut was in the way from where two men came out both unarmed and locals, with locals I mean Daurs. They shook hand and I noticed a very pretty boy about whom the Zakhmi Dill song is all about. There is a concept among the Pathan where they have a kind of pet boy moving around; but this was the first time I saw here. We entered the tehsil and later met Tehsildar a young man who looked too civilised to be here. The usual round of tea break and I inquired about the record and after an hour I realised that among all these I had more authentic knowledge about them and area. Nevertheless I still learnt a lot. The tehsil was made in 1984 and came to present office in 2004 and Tehsildar being too young had no idea that there is anything like border and administrative report yearly, it is no more written. A meeting has been arranged with an old man, a manuscript in Urdu is also on the horizon. I asked them to explain me the area but then I have to explain them.

Tochi valley does not start at this point rather it is another 100 kilometers wherever almost three major arteries of water joins and forms Tochi and it dwindles down the whole arm starting from fingers and going upward. Boya is the area wrist toward joint. Its important lies in the fact that it is the first crossing point of Tochi in case if you want to continue toward Miran Shah. On the other hand Boya is important because it allows the crossing for Shawal Valley. This particular area is called Upper Daur the Ismael khel Wazir tribe in the north and Khnoi Khel in the south. Daurs are an agricultural tribe, although they are relative to Wazir in a distant way but a kind of relative which Wazir seldom owns. They were the first one which approached the British to provide protection to them from the Wazirs and in lieu they agree to pay taxes and this is how all this started. They all agreed and added bit of here and there mostly about fakir of Ipi. I asked them about Spins Khaisora and I need to check the account also. We all came out.

I again stepped out of the Tehsil gate first and stood to let other two through small opening, a motor cyclist went by, then a pickup full of talibans no second thought came, they had a good look at me for me it was like a girl standing alone outside the college gate with a pickup full of talibans passing in front. I did not try to have an eye contact with them but I still had one who was talking to another but there were no hostile eyes but then what is normal and what is abnormal here I quite different from the dictionary meaning of words. Now we all three walked myself again on the roadside. I said to Riaz these were talibans and he nodded, they can fire anytime I said, well they can but they don't because we have a pact we don't check them and they don't fire at us. I agreed and genuinely appreciated the pact. A Toyota hatchback approached with tinted glasses, I have just read the old faded signboard inside the tehsil office which had warned that any car having tinted glasses will roll down the glasses while passing in front of post otherwise it will be fired upon. This car had one window half rolled and I said to Riaz, Taliban and

he nodded. I looked at Car there was nothing else to look around while crossing the road, in previous instances atleast I could see the Taliban inside but not now, they also passed, I was still wearing the khaki felt hat for safety against sun. I have no idea what went through all these men when they saw me as I thought about them so did they because I was different, had I been wearing a uniform I would at least be placed in any category of scout or army but now what. Without hat probably I might have escaped the scrutiny being one of the tehsil official but this head gear is the key. I must change my head gear to the local pagri otherwise I can easily be taken for a American agent. Recent trip to meet my girl friend Reena at Harrisonburh will be the key evidence 'after all you went to white house, yes or no ? and I will say yes. Then you were in the Langely district yes or no and I will nod affirmative; what evidence will then be left. I just shiver on the thoughts.

The Mus Khan Post is shrouded in the dust layer as it is quite common to the Tochi valey and by it self s another evidence of how old and dry is the history of valley. This becomes even more extreme as one follows upstream. Thus the migration which took place is much older than the other riparian valleys. Tochi Valley is the opening of the all Central Aryan Plataeu , it is water outlet of the paltaeu which can very rightly be called as the Pathan or Wazir Plataeu. The old most ferious of all tribes were the Ye-Hu tribe that came down and Tochi is not a ntive word neither Persian nor English. The tribes came down and they did not seetlesd astride the river because waterflow was unreliable so they had their habitat on a bit higher ground. It is alos quite logical to expect that also had the most individualistic of them lal living on the high ground and Musa Khan Post has to be seen in that perspective. No dountd the British made this a classic warning post but if they had not done that some native might have done so or in past it could have happened. The nature of habitat also is a pinter of history where there is no phusical evidence in the form of ruins or documents taken the choice of posts are logical evidence of that continuous human living pattern in which high ground occupation is logical choice.

The local oral tradition runs on similar lines where long long ago Boya existed and it existed when Moen jo daro was there. A resting point for the caravans for the travellers for the tribes. The revenvue and ownership was with the Wazir Tribes the Ismael Khels. There were no individual owners or landlord rather every man a king in himself bounded with blood lines with others at times an extended family . It was like this since the human memory records and is still the same in every aspect. Live and let live as long the Riawaj and Shariah is being observed.

When I had crossed the road as bit mentally safe the last of the vehicles a nav approached, now I had calculated that if a fire has not come from cars or motorbikes than van is the last to expect doing the samw ethus I had a full stare at the passeengers. A woman in veil I mean full vein was sitting with the window open and in the last seat was agirl student of marriageable age. That measb life is going on normal if a girl can go for studies away from house ina wagon and than comes back to home than life is normal.

Later I had tea with Hammad and listen to spicy juicy and naughty tales of lieutants life in Karachi. It seems that nothing much has changed in the way of subalterns life at least in Karachi. Stories of fun , running after girls and thinking of new and novel ways to impress the feminine side. The golden advices of another subaltern who claiming a masters degree in these fields making the matter worse for youngsters. Commanding officers of varying nature some who would take the subalterns out for parties themselves other making them come to office in the evenings as well. All these making life here

comfortable and historic in nature. Where will this young man is going to end up? He has already proven his mettle in this war facing bullets.

1730 hours. The dust storm is still running out, light came for brief period enough to recharge the laptop. I had a joint, a call from commandant the good news is that he has found old record of all officers dating from 1940 till to date; also the complete address of two SJs. Visibility has gone down now the post is a shelter thus best time to attack is during a dust storm in hot weather. Voice of crow is the only voice or the preening of tabs otherwise absolutely stillness

### **Tuesday 2340 hours**

The day started in a normal day last night myself and Immad were chatting till 0300 hours the topics ranged from the effective use of helicopters to the venture of Immad in a coaching centre after girls where another senior major was also after the same girl and so on. In the morning after breakfast at around ten and a joint I walked with Immad to one of the post in the rear of the fort facing the river, Immad narrated me his find that few rabbits are also living here as pets. We walked to the post which does not have any name but a good one with two scouts one havildar and other a soldier, havildar belonged to the Oerakzai Tribe and soldier a Turi. The view of the valley is good and one starts to grasp the very concept of Tochi Valley itself. The time just froze, a river which was partly visible, a green oasis and on our immediate face on the other side of the river on a track were two mud houses rather compounds I think mud forts or palace or villa is more appropriate word. Fantastic architecture in layers and tiers, it was a compound on a much grand level than anything so far. If you face the river which becomes the valley mouth also the space opens up to almost ten miles of width. From the left Shawal Valley joins in with the Tochi Valley coming from right with a huge hill in the centre and then the range of hillocks going in the far distant. The valley which turns right is leading to Afghanistan and at the bend is Kaamr Khumar but before that Pai Wazir with its white tower and as you follow the flow of water downstream from where the two valleys join in the Datta Khel is on left from where a track then leads upwards first to Tut narai and then onwards to Razmak.

Degan is the most notorious town or village here which is also situated in that vast green plateau which is rolling from south to north, Boya comes next and then the track goes on the other bank. I tried to put my geography in order and was briefed by the havildar that you cannot see Khar Kamar from here but it is visible from Musa Khan post. The overall picture seems to be that you can be standing anywhere from 1000 BC to well present day and it seems nothing has changed if you take out electric poles and black road, other than it could be Jerusalem of Jesus with Romans occupying it and Jews living under them, it was how it looked when Alexander marched through the area in 323 BC, it could be Nineva with people building mud tower to reach the sky, it was time of Hammurabbi giving his laws, a moen jo daro or Harrapa with Aryans living, it resembled Mecca before the last Prophet {pbuh} was born and well it is still resembling that town even after thousand years. It also gives the classic look of wild west with dusty road and mud houses orchards and no law in the town. It all depends upon your imagination and it was never short of fuel because more I observed the mud villas and in far distant at Degan the more solid became my imagination. The havildar informed me that in far distant near Degan is a factory which is extracting chromite and there are strong rumours of gold present in the area. In American history it is the gold rush days, the hill behind the Degan all of sudden brought back memories of Mackennas Gold.



A tractor with a trolley behind it brought me back to the present time. I was trying to figure out how the 1958 and 1966 skirmish took place here in which Tochi Scouts were involved, dis the invaders came from the valley mouth there is no other way less one which comes down from Gharla mai but it onvolved crossing of river. The invaders can come from any direction such is the layout of the area and the militant culture of the people.

Meanwhile Subeadr Riaz came and I asked him certain questions like how far is Degan, who own this house, who is living in that house which is next to the fort wall. He first pointed at Degan and showed a white building towards the left and said it is the madrassah of gul Bahadur the man most wanted, on the right at the river bend is the white pillar that is a mosque which is being run by moulvai sadiqullah, all names are such which are stomach churning in present situation all having head money and rated as most wanted in the world . The very house next to the fort is owned by another Taliban leader who keeps an eye on our fort and they were the one wo made sure in 2007 that no one sells us or bring any edible to the fort, we were left with only two sacks of flour when one day we just stopped a truck carrying 400 sacks to Afghanistan which we got off loaded and told the driver to go back to Bannu and get the sacks from our supply store, meanwhile another truck came with almost equal number of ghee and we did the same to him , although we give them the fare but rest was given to them by the supply, thus we solved our siege issue. We all had a good laugh over this ingenuity of mind.

Riaz is well informed and updated me that 16000 rupees is given to each member of the Daur Qaum living here as part of their collective earning on chromite sale, daily 14 trucks go out down country. I was fully impressed with the utility of qaum system. We ordered tea and the scout ran down to fetch it from the mess, I inquired Riaz about the proposed meeting with local malik and the Taliban leader on the history issue.

Riaz later gave me and Hammad one aof the very useful insight into frontier warfare and aslo on this conflict. He recalled how in 2007 the Guearrilas of regular army and scouts conducted joint operation in the adjoining village and we ran short of water, in the end the villagers gave us the water during a respite in the war but not to the army because by ideology they hate authority. They will let you do anything in there area as long as you inform them and take their blessing. The concept of statae authority has different connotation in yhis part of Tochi valley. If you are besieged then you are at your own, as such I have to think first of all about the safety of my own qaum and the scouts. The feud runs here for generation we have to live among these people they are our own we cannot kill them without any reason.

Riaz narrtaed how he was the post commander at .... Where they had the generator for electricity and the very day they started operation the talibans came and ordered not to use it again, I gave them my identity card showing that I am also Wazir, next day I did not sitched on the lights but power was there , very next day the same atlibans came and apologised for inconveince, they had showed my card to their commander Moulvi.... Who not only appreciate my gesture but also appointed me a local commander of the Taliban. The hard reality is that if you want anything done here it is through diplomacy and not through use of force. I fully appreciated his philosophy and agreed with evey word he said. Army comes here for a year or two and then another unit and another, so no emotions just raw killing but that is neither the soloution and above all army to date has not shown any muscles because there are no muscles at all to be displayed there fore these militia officers have adpted the approach of solving the issues at local level , Boya for all practical purpose is an independent state with its own riwaj and customs.

Riaz most explosive narrative was the one where a suicide bomber laden with explosives drove to .... In hunt for divisional commander who was on reconnaissance in the area, it was by chance that I opened the car and saw the death material , we were twenty men at the post and there was no chance of surviving in case if he had pulled the chord. I chatted with him on being Wazir and persuaded him that his target is not in the area and he will be informed when that arrives so it will be better if he goes back now and try next time, the suicide bomber agreed and went back. Unthinkable but I agree that it must have happened.

Riaz's philosophy is simple live and let live. He understands his vulnerability and also of the post. We help these people by letting them go out when they are in need to bury someone in a curfew day , they helped us with letting our scouts go to attend the funeral of mother on a day when there is no curfew. It is mutual .Once a girl ran away with a scout who was on a post and a feud started resultantly all the four platoons stationed at Boya were posted at other areas but I came back with a permission from commandant . The issue was much broader the feud would have lasted for decades and a war would have started among the clans. We finally agreed in a Jirga where the girl was allowed to marry the scout and never to be seen again in the tribe area. Our plea was that girl was beaten by her brother and she came to the post asking for ....which was granted by the individual scout as part of Pakhtoon honour thus nothing of riwaj was broken.

I was interested in the social pattern of the people so I inquired how you get married here. The boy's mother normally selects the girl and then girl's mother visit the boy's house and sees the situation and the boy and that is the end. Who pays who was my next query, well different clans have different riwaj normally the boy's family gives presently 4 tolas of gold and also pay for the dowry of the girl. What about women eloping away. Seldom was the answer because if it happens then the girl's clan is not allowed to wear the traditional Lung the paggri as long as the parents of the girl are alive. On the other hand majority of the men are abroad earning money and their wives are all alone and so is the case of many more whose husbands are driving trucks and they normally visit once a year so many have committed suicide I did not ask the number but I knew it is very less.

Meanwhile dust storm was kicking in the valley and winds became fast and wild thus we came down and walked back to the mess.

Saturday , tomorrow I will be leaving Boya and intend going to Datta Khel to see the area .

2230 Hours room No 4 Tochi Mess

All of a sudden heavy firing has started, I was just having a cup of tea, since there has been a kind of peace thus initially I thought that generator has started but then when the burst was long and a sound of rocket coupled it thus now I am convinced that it is firing. The problem is that at times army or scouts also carry out drills thus no one knows what has happened. Normally my course mate major General Ali in adjoining room does make telephone call and it is always reassuring that he is around but now he has gone on leave . Lets see what happens next, tea is getting cold.

**0130 hours 21/22 June night 2012.**

Well nothing more about the firing, by this time I have become used to firing, hold on there is a whistling noise as rockets are being fired, generator is also running but this definitely firing of rocket , much ado nothing. The electricity here is eccentric, I have no idea when it comes and when it goes, at times there is not much of power even to run a fan as now.

Let me start from Boya. I did not went to Datta Khel because there was no convoy going there and secondly I was not sure about the behaviour of army, not that that they would have said anything for the fact that my course mate is the general but they are always suspicious of everything and everyone. The Commandant Colonel Wajahat had directed Captain Immad to drop me to MiranShah in the Scouts vehicle but that entailed a lot of administrative inconvenience thus I said that I will go back to Miranshah on the army convoy. The procedure is that the convoys from the forward posts like Doi Toi and Datta Khel where army units are deployed leave their respective areas early in the morning on Sunday, a curfew is imposed but it is not observed in Wazir areas which starts from Boya onwards. These convoys under protection reaches Boya Bridge where another convoy from Gharlamai which is located on the other bank of river Tochi also joins at Bridge and from there they move as one convoy, this area is Daur territory and Maulvi Sadiq Noor is the war lord where as Maulvi Gul Bahadur is the uncrowned king of Wazir territory in Degan, the Datta Khel tribes are lords by themselves.

On Friday night at boya one person was shot dead by the Pawani Post at night because he had ventured close to the post, his dead body remained where it was shot and in the morning the Khassadars came and so were the Taliban's or the men of Sadiq Noor and were satisfied that it is not an aggressive act by the Scouts rather it was the afult of that man, the man had an identity card in his pocket and a Saudi passport as well. On Saturday the representative of Sadiq Noor acme and met subedar Riaz outside the fort unofficially to convey the message from Sadiq Noor that nothing to worry. Riaz at his own send the felicitation message and regads of Captain Immad and in the evening the reply came back that sadia Noor is also giving regards. The talibans requested that the compulsory compensation which government gives for every person who dies of state's bullet may please be given. All this was narrated by the subedar Riaz.

I was now mentally worried lest this act of killing the person may braek this peace pact and I may become a target of explosives or revenge. In this part of world everything is possible and nothing can be ruled out. There is no logic there are no questions asked simple killing is not enough it has to be the most painful death imaginable, they peel your skin off and then cut your head with which they play football. Myself and Captain Immad had been discussing this whole scenario every night that why we are not reacting to this, we are only reactive. However a week stay in Boya has opened new vistas of vision in understanding this convoluted warfare. I have seen with my own eyes and also took pictures of Taliban's taking evening walks with a foreigner probably an Uzbek around the Northern wall of the fort, if you wave they wave back. I thought of why they are not being shot with a sniper rifle or a machine gun, that is the most talked about question every where but on ground realities are different and they are unexplainable , it is only by staying here that one understands them. Myself and Immad discussed many novel ideas of destroying the enemies. The dilemma is that there is no proper word even to explain them. Sitting in Harrisonburgh it is easy to classify all of them as Taliban and just shot them and burn their houses, there is no morality involved because this what they are doing to us. But as I said it is convoluted

.

On Sunday morning after breakfast, hold on let me add few more words about Boya. Captain Immad was a good company and I really enjoyed his subaltern tales which are no less than Venus in India. He has spent all of his three years of army service in Karachi and as such had plenty of tales to narrate. Not much has changed in army way of living or shall I say a subaltern way of life in these twenty five years. If I had not seen Immad on 6<sup>th</sup> May limping and smiling despite going through a hell of fire I would have classified him as a chocolate cream soldier but I now respect him and admire him. He is living the way an army officer should live which is have fun when it is there because you never know when you are hit by a bullet. The boy has proven that he is worthy of all the juicy tales which he has narrated.

Our routine was simple getting up late, at time I did not slept all night and went out for early morning walk within the fort. Taking pictures and chatting with posts. I think there was only one occasion when it happened other wise getting up late, having a joint and then , one day it was going to Tehsil , other day it was going there gain to meet the local Malik, on day three it was long sleep , on day four there was a farewell lunch for havildar Ijaz who was going on retirement, on day five it was normal and that is it. First about that farewell lunch. The tradition in Scouts is that when a person goes on retirement his Qaum gives him a farewell food. We were also invited, Ijaz was garlanded and then we had food sitting on floor , I noticed that all scouts are very good in shall I say table manners. They use fork for eating or peeling the meat of chicken. This is a sign of civilisation. Then after sumptuous food which was tasty, I had mutton and avoided chicken. Ijaz has spend thirteen years as gunman of the commandant, he is Yousafzai by tribe and lives in Swabi. I have got his farewell speech and list of gifts with me as a record, he was given thirteen tea sets, ten water sets, five sweet dish bowls sets, one water cooler, one umbrella, one blanket, six clocks, hot pot set, unstitched clothes and almost ten thousand rupees in cash. I was amazed, Ijaz stood and one man from his Qaum read the farewell speech in urdu with a number of Pashtu couplets which always were applauded by the guests and qaum members. Then he announced the gifts and they were presented to him and he received them in one hand and very next moment they were put on table and next gift was there. It was like a royalty, I have not seen this kind of exuberance even in marriages and mind you this all happened at Boya. Then Ijaz spoke and there were tears in his eyes over this show of affection. It is at this point that one understands the bond of Qaum. This is a cycle which goes on and on. The junior most soldier of his Qaum also gave him present and so were gifts from other Qaums and from canteen contractor from Tehsildar. The concept of giving cash is novel to army culture but quite common in Scouts, here everything is done in the name of Qaum, they may even take bribes from transporters for the welfare of Qaum. The bottom line is as long as it is for the collective benefit no one will report .

#### **21<sup>st</sup> June 2012, North Waziristan, MiranShah.**

Two days back the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr Yousaf Raza Gilani has been disqualified by the apex court because he did not wrote a letter to the Swiss government asking them to initiate criminal charges against President of Pakistan Mr Asif Ali Zardari. The premier's plea was that the constitution gives blanket amnesty to the president on this the court gave him a punishment of 30 seconds. The opposition and all those lawyers who normally wait for such happenings very swiftly again went to the court and asked for justice that since premier has now become a criminal because he has been punished thus he should be disqualified. The speaker of the national assembly gave the ruling that it is only the

parliament which can decide this issue and there is nothing wrong with a 30 seconds punishment rather it was admonished and not punished. The opposition and professional lawyers and sympathizers of the nation went back to the court to ask about the legality of the speaker's ruling. Meanwhile the son of chief justice was involved in a high level crime drama in which he went abroad on someone else's money to Monte Carlo and stayed with women who was not his wife. The chief justice remarked that he has no idea what kind of job his son is doing and neither he has asked his son from where does this brand new Range Rover have come from. I have no doubt that the government had some kind of hand behind this drama but they did not manipulate the son of chief justice and very next day the chief justice gave this decision and now country is without a prime minister because since he was given 30 seconds punishment so he must leave the office.

Sitting here at MiranShah and going through all this, what is happening here one cannot resist but to recall the destruction of Baghdad by Mongols and at that precise moment the ulemas and scholars were busy debating whether such and such animal is permitted to be eaten or not. The Supreme Court has acted in most immature manner by disregarding and discarding the international environment, they are more concerned with the lacunas of law. Let it be kept in mind that civil war in America was started due to the ruling of Supreme Court which allowed the slavery in 1848. Also in 1971 the same supreme court of America ruled that orgy, gangbang, water sport, bestiality, BDSM and many other such acts performed by men and women not to forget animals should be treated as work of art and not as prostitution.

How can six or seven men pass a ruling that is offensive to an overwhelming population of the world and now because of that judgment there are sexual crimes taking place all over the world but those judges care a hoot. In such environments as prevailing now in Pakistan no one in his right mind should come forward for investment or business. Had those judges be here they would have created a lot of lacunas in dealing with terrorism? Did you see the man planting the explosives on the road? Can you recognize this man in turban as the same who fired on you from 300 yards? Did you have the warrant to search his vehicle after you saw him firing on the crowd? And in the end any good lawyer can get Maulvi Sadiq Noor and Gul Bahadur scot free by declaring them insane and mentally retarded thereby absolving them of all these killings. The state would end up paying more on the medical facilities of these men rather than spending the same amount for the rehabilitation of injured people.

On political front the best part being here is that one is saved by unlimited political talk shows that are going around. No one has been made premier rather Makhdoom Shahabuddin the nominee has been arrested on the orders of supreme court or words to that effect. Malik Riaz the man who alleged that the son of Chief Justice has been black mailing him is facing contempt of court, he is debarred from talking to media. No lawyer is willing to fight his case as all have been threatened that they will not be allowed to enter the Bar, two other lawyers are facing this scenario. In short it is a judicial coup and these seven men have made this country a hostage now plunging it into a crisis after crisis. No one can talk about them no riots no campaign, strange. I don't think it has happened anywhere else for long people have been talking about the Bangladesh Model in which military and judiciary runs the country with a subservient parliament and bureaucracy and it seems it has now been put in place here. The one change here is that gone one step higher with Judiciary taking the lead. In this scenario the army gets an open hand as they are allowed to basically run the foreign policy and this is one thing which Pakistan Army always loves to do. Now any civilian government who dares to oppose any policy matter can be taken to the task in a very polite manner by simply any one filing a petition in supreme court or even they taking a

suo motto notice, the advantage in this system is no Western government can make any hue and cry , they in any case are always more comfortable in dealing with the military. The media gets a free hand on any one less the military and judiciary , this is what has happened now. No political government can survive in this manner for the reason that every act of them can be petition . Public feels contended in seeing all rich men being disgraced in court, just have a look at the Malik Riaz. Media gets free hand in making money after all media is a money making commercial organisation. This is new face of Pakistan and there seems to be no way out. Chief Justice Iftikhar Choudhry is the man with a shallow ego who can even put this country's future at stake for the sake of his ego. He has nothing to loose, he is getting a handsome pay, house, chauffer driven car and pension and above all a reputation for being honest. He is after all the man who owns no car no house and does not know what job his son is doing and from where he is getting the money. He is still lauded by public and his lawyers for his stance against the General Musharraf in 2007 when he was sacked for alleged corruption. Now he is a free man, where as Media can put any man into disgrace but it is only Ifthar who has the power to even put the media into silence. He is the most powerful man and most dangerous man in the history of Pakistan.

Background of all this dates back to 1977- 79 when a military coup not only toppled the democratic government of Mr. Zulfiqar Bhutto but also send him to gaol and he was hanged on a murder charge in which despite the supreme court giving a split decision in which three judges out of six acquitted him but then chief justice put his lot in making sure that he is hanged. From then onwards supreme court became a political tool in the hands of military always ensuring that Peoples Party the Bhutto's party should suffer in one way or the other. Benazir Bhutto daughter of late Z.A. Bhutto finally came to power in 1989 and soon her government was sent home on corruption charges and her husband the present president Mr Asif Ali Zardari was indicted in as many as hundred cases and remained behind bars as long as the party was in opposition, Benazir came back to power in 1993 and Zardari was released on bail again Benazir's government was dismissed and her rival Mr Nawaz Sharif the darling of establishment was again in power. In 1999 Nawaz Shariff dismissed the army chief Musharaff and instantly army took power and Nawaz was sent on exile and cases of corruption and criminal intent were framed.

In 2007 Musharaff tried to sack the present chief justice and unexpectedly the nation stood up led by lawyers and when Musharaff finally agreed to have elections , Benazir was shot dead. In the end Musharaff had to leave the country and People's Party came into power with Gilani as premier and Zardari as president. They under the political pressure which was led by arch rival Nawaz Shariff agreed to reinstate Iftikhar Choudhry as chief justice. Iftikhar in his very first moves put all those judges on trial who did not took his side during his days of suspension, he had judges of his own choice making sure that even judges who have completed their tenure been given extension in service, he made sure that he has judges loyal to him. In June 2010 he had an emergency meeting at midnight when president nominated the senior most judge as a replace of a judge who has completed his service; Iftikhar got the next junior judge elevated and appointed as judge of supreme court.

The judiciary in Pakistan as in other part of world is regarded as sacred and debate is still raging that who is supreme, Parliament or the Supreme Court. The combination and alliance of media and judiciary is now in place and Pakistan again faces an uphill challenge. Army is happy because its chief General Kayani is already working on extension of service which is due to expire next year. Thus it is

also army high command which has high stakes. In case if the whole system is sent home packing then there will be no one to appoint a new army chief and both Iftikhar & Kayani will remain in power.

### Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2012.

I have not been able keep track of the days , I thought it is Wednesday but then the muazzan first from the city side and then from the Tochi Mosque gave the Khutba and it was only then that I realised that it is Friday. This day is quite important as almost everyone offers prayers. The khutba is short and to the point where as the Khutba coming from the city side is always loud. I have no idea what sermon the city Maulvi gives since it is in Pashto but from the tone it is not difficult to guess what are the topics. In Punjab the Friday sermon is long and to be honest quite vulgar at times , the maulvi tends to cross the limits, one time in my own village I heard the maulvi saying ‘ women who are atking abth now should hurry’ which is quite offensive but none dare to speak. While going to the Boya and coming abck I noticed the mosques design here, they are of mud and no high minarets, only at Degan I looked through the binoculars to see a white building which was madreessah also. Enroute to Boya the only way I could make out about mosque was through the slight curve in the otherwise normal building, this curve is Manbar. At Boya I offered the Juma Prayers and sermon was in Pashto. Women does not go the mosques here, in Punjab in certain villages they do go, my grandmother used to go but not my mother.

At around 1900 hours I was sitting in my room trying to make some sense of the Tochi Scouts during period of 1922 – 1936 which is by and large quite administrative in nature, the match between Greece and Germany in Euro 2012 was on television , out side there was private dinner going on , there were fiur or five officers all colonels and brigadiers with television set in the lawn which was not for the match but to listen to new political situation talk shows. All of a sudden there was a blast, the sound was terrifying as some thing has hit the mess building, my heart beat became abnormal, like the heart beat of a rabbit when you catch him. The Televison went off the air and then there was another blast. The missile I later learnt had hit the mess barrack which is not more than twenty yards from my room. My first instinct was to switch off the room ligts as the assassin is only targeting me, on second thought I swithed it on and just sat there. The mind made an appreciation that whether I sit in the room or outside the chances of a missile hitting me are equal so I just sat on the chair. I thought of Reena and composed a message for her. In such a scenario it is natural to think of loved ones and I cannot think of any one else other than her.

The back ground of this attack goes to another incident which happened at South Waziristan where 41 Punjab tried to bring a compound not more than a kilometre away from there positionunder there control and almost a replica of what happened here on 6<sup>th</sup> May took place again, Army suffered a dosen casualties including an officer. The notion of victory has passed back to the Mahsuds and Army has again suffered a confidence shaking blood mayhem.

On Saturday morning the aviation contingent here invited me for atea break, the colonel staf and G-1 Intelligence Lieutenant Colonel Umar were also invited, it was in connection with their room renovation. Major Adnan invited me when I met him I recalled that he is the same officer whose picture I saw in 2005 sitting at Tochi Mess, why I remembered himwas because that was the first time I saw Tochi Mess pictures. He is in cobra and it was he who gave me an update on the Ladda Operation. I was invited to see the Tennis Final in the evening at the Artillery Courts .

I walked the one mile distance at 1700 hours, it is quite hot at this time still bearable, I wore my black shoes, last time I tried the chaplis/ sandal on the same track and was not comfortable as the stones starts pricking your soles. The artillery is always reputed for its administrative arrangements and this was no exception. The ground a clay court was well marked with white limestone , there are two types of lime stones used I learnt later a normal and liquid. The game is not serious one rather a shugal, but it is played seriously with little observance of rules. The players all officers. The first match was for third position between Brigadier Shahid and Lieutenant Colonel umar on one side and Commander Logistics colonel Akhtar and Captain hamza on other side. Shahid is a cool and very polite person and same holds true for all, Akhtar creates life in the court with his remarks. Other than this they all are average players. There was a umpire a captain sitting o a high chair , two linesmen also officers and almosta dosen pickers. A dosen officers were there to witness the match , 45 Medium or Field is the new artillery regiment replacing the 149 which is going to Bahawalpur. The CO of new unit isa smart guy ith a body builder body , he seems to be the fittest among all his officers a sad reflection of his officers, however I was disappointed to see him wearing n iron bangle which is worn by shias , this clear reflection of religious sectarianism is no good.

The match was fun , later the final between Tochi Scouts and the Divisional Headquarters took place. Now this is in my opinion the most dangerous Tennis tournament which is palyed with guns all around and soldiers on sentry duty as well

### 3rd July 2012.

Another full moon has elapsed, I saw it last evening when it was at its best glow, I understand that a full moon is a full moon , but what I want to high light is that at around 2100 hours it was well above the lone tree at the entrance of the mess, this is my yard stick, at 1900 hours it is too early but still visible but at 2000 hours it is half visible through the dark and dense shades of the tree , its upper half visible and light pouring all around. At 2100 hours it is well above the tree and then all night it travels from left to right. This left to right is in relation to my room and this bench which is placed out side other wise it is east –west movement.

The drones are humming above, they seems to be a part of life here, all the time present in air and their low humming noise. Since last full moon almost halfa dosen drone attacks have been carried out, the last one was yesterday morning then on Sunday morning before that on Friday evening. The television normally gives instant news of the attack and the number of people killed, so afr I think they all have hit the right targets. I now believe that even the troops also look upon them as friendly because they are hitting the very men who are causing the problem .

Last one month has been the Euro Cup football at Ukraine and Poland, Spain finally won it . Mario Balotelli was fantastic and I think his both goals against Germany are classic especially the second one; but after the final I think he lacks sports man spirit, the greatness is even in accepting the defeat after all it is just a sports and better team won. Pakistan made a come back at Colombo, but test seems to be heading for a draw. There was a controversy about the Mohsin Khan and ramiz raja, I was fortunate to watch that programme on Geo sports. I have afiled to understand the issue. Ramiz has passed some remarks about Mohsin and this Mohsin is a regular presenter on the Geo sports channel. No wwhen in a country you can pass derogatory remarks about the president and prime minister all in the name of freedom of expression then what is the issue in calling a cricket coach as unfit to be so. One of the



journalist called ramiz Raja disgracer, I think Rameez should sue him. England has beaten Australia in both the one dayers, a sad affair but I think it has got something to do with the Queen's jubilee. It would have been premeditated to lose to Australia during the jubilee year.

Personally I am in a bad state of mind, feeling all alone and none to blame other than me, flashes of Azadeh, Salik and Samina comes to my mind on regular basis and so does Reena. I phoned her on her birthday, she at least has the courtesy to attend it although she has stopped sending me emails. She was the first and the last girl to be so caring. At my age and state of mind she is the perfect companion but here again I have to blame myself. At times I think what am I doing and what I intend doing next.

I have been doing the research on fakir Of Ipi and managed to reach the year 1945. Fantastic person, the most accomplished guerrilla leader, rather to call him guerrilla leader is not the very appropriate word, there is no word to describe him, he is not Omar Mukhtar although he has lot of commonality with him, he is above Che Guerra and Fidel and Mao. Lawrence of Arabia comes quite close but Ipi was not in politics, to him fighting was all that kept him going. Osama Bin laden is the one which comes most close to him in term of historical similarities, both religious and both were hunted by the super powers of their time, Britain hunted Ipi with almost two division of army and group of Royal air Force aircraft but never been able to capture him, this is where Osama lacks the vision. Shami Pir was another historical character which emerged onto the North Waziristan scene for a brief period and created sensation. It seems unbelievable but it is true that a foreign religious person within months can have so much followers among the Wazirs.

Weather has been pretty good, frequent showers and not very intense heat, light remains available till 1930 because officers play tennis, oh I forgot to mention about Wimbledon, Nadal's exit was unexpected lets see what happens to Andy Murray.

I have typed over 45000 words so far and I am quite please with myself but still I think I lack discipline and this discipline is only available at Reena's place in Harrisonburgh.

It is half past five in the morning and day seems to have been started long ago, only the humans are sleeping although majority of them offers fajr prayers, this is the beauty of Fajr prayers or for that matter all the prayers that they divide the day and gives an natural time period of the day. I missed these Fajr prayers in Glasgow and Harrisonburg where it is very difficult to start the day because there is no set time for starting but Fajr is the key to success. All our daily routines start with Fajr prayers, now I can go and have a cup of tea from the mess because I know that the cook and waiters were up for the prayers and it is this thing which is lacking in non Muslim countries. In Christian world Sunday mass is one which keeps your Sunday organised but here the whole day all around the year is kept intact. Ramadan is also approaching and I have my apprehensions about it but here in Tochi Mess it would be fantastic, I think I will be able to keep the fast for the first time in my life in a proper manner; lets see.

## **11<sup>th</sup> September 2012**

I managed to reach the aviation base in time, the traffic in early part of the day on University Road was a matter of concern. There is no public transport in the city, the private wagons are quite inadequate for the load, saw small and young school children waiting for the transport, many others were

being transported packed like sardines in small pickups. I have vivid image of little school girls clad in brown uniform their head covered in scarves, not all had the chance to have a seat, as I passed them in my four door cabin I was transfixed into the eyes of a small girl standing innocently in the wagon. The road is dirty and dusty, near war cemetery there are two check points both manned by the army police, there was a fat havildar along with two young soldiers manning them, he had his sub machine gun wrapped around his fat tummy, in my opinion it would take him around ninety seconds to get it into firing position which is long time in present circumstances. Another check post is near the air force base, there is one more in between these two. The air force personals were without any arms and moved in a slow motion, however there were warning signs painted on the wall that warns any one of being shot if he is suspected of any suspicious movement. Another check post is near the aviation base which is manned by the 9 Squadron, it was quite efficient.

Had the breakfast and informed the duty NCO of my presence, luckily the weather was good and we took off at 0830 hours. There was quite a queue at the helicopter parking area, few air force men also about them I was sure that they will not get the seat in the helicopter, inter services rivalry. The helicopter was mainly carrying the ammunition of Cobra attack helicopters placed at Wanna. We first headed towards the Thal on Kurram. Due to overnight rain the valley is green and visibility clear, small clouds waft around innocently and I could see the Durand Line. The area looks and represents a marked difference from the May when I flew over it, it is scenic now. Thal Fort is quite grandeur in construction I had visited it and stayed night in it in 1992, it has a tree that was planted by the sister of Mohammad Ali Jinnah while they were enroute to Parachinar

### 21 September 2012- 2330 hours

Today was the day of respect for the holy prophet 'youm ishaq e rasul'. World has changed in last ten days because one American {small arms firing is going outside, no idea what is this all about, short bursts of machine guns with intermittent loud bursts} had put on you tube a movie 'innocence of Muslims' which I have not seen but which has put the whole world on an inferno {firing still going on}. It all started I think on 12<sup>th</sup> September when I saw the American Embassy in Ben Ghazi being razed to ground, American ambassador and three others were killed and instantaneously {firing is now quite near now} there were demonstration {now, long bursts of fire is the fort under attack} let me see outside,

0100 hours. After an hour the things have returned to normalcy, there was intense firing, illuminating rounds of artillery and mortars and again intense firing. Night is beautiful outside with heavenly bliss of stars and Drone. The birds shrieked and cats growled. I sat for some time outside on the bench wondering about my own disposition and fate. I am emotionless; I think none will be worried much if I am hit. I came inside in a state of fear as to where the missile will land, will it land on my roof and is the roof strong enough to sustain the shock. Thought of Mizar, Dwa Toi, Datta Khel, of all the persons my mind recalled Flight Lieutenant Lowell who died in similar conditions at data Khel in 1943, he had the picture of his wife at his death bed.

I am not that scared as I was in May this year but still fear is fear. There is outrage all over the world; seventeen people have died in Pakistan only today seven cinemas have been burnt down. The freedom of speech has taken over thirty lives so far all over the world and today French magazine has published naked cartoon of prophet, it is too much. To me the war has begun today and soon the consequences will be evident. Only last week in Islamabad I saw western men and a women strolling at

Kohsar market and I was happy to notice that but that is now gone for long. Only the Asians and black will feel safe here in this country for long, white race is in danger of elimination now. It looks berserk to think that no western country is willing to take any step to put an end to this madness, the actress of the movie has filed for the taking away of the movie from U tube but the court has rejected that on the plea that the producer has not been given a copy of the warrant, what the hell is this.

There seem to be quite a resemblance of how the WW1 began, it all started with a man firing a shot at Sarajevo and who knows the WW3 start from a man putting on a movie or a cartoon about the prophet. But all means the west has lost the war against terror in this one week, they have harvested a new generation of people who will be brought up in a hate environments, the beauty is that UK has remained aloof from all this nonsense and two most idiotic countries the French and Americans are paying heavily for this insanity. The very idea of free speech is absurd, the media is killer, remember what Hitler said in his autobiography when he pointed to the Jewish press for the cause of his hate and similar things are happening now. I am also thinking of 1976 when the movie Message was first screened in America and the black American Muslims had taken hostages of a building now the same movie is being shown on cable here with Urdu dubbing, in another instance same was the case with Ten Commandments it was banned in Pakistan when it was first released in sixties but now it is being shown openly. Take the case of last temptation of Christ, a rubbish and derogatory movie about Christ. What stops the movie makers to make a porno version of Mary and birth of Jesus, it can be done in the name of free speech, after all American supreme court has ruled in 1970 that porn is a form of art yet many people have been sacked in America and other countries for watching porn at office, is watching art a crime during working hours or a liability to seek any job. Supreme court of America has also given the verdict in 1858 that slavery is allowed and legal. The point to bring home is that one cannot live in statues and rules and these have to be amended with the ground reality.

Pakistan government has very wisely taken the side of protestors otherwise the losses would have been more.

I have to go to Bandigar tomorrow, it is located very close to the Durand Line approximately fifteen miles north east of Miranshah, the scouts had occupied it in 2001 and I want to see the area but now I am having second thoughts about this operation, who knows that tomorrow they plant an IED or carry out an ambush, after all tomorrow is not a ROD, it is risky but now it is too late to back out from this. My ears are still very tense and picks up any noise that is made outside my room as I think I may be attacked by the intruder and I have nothing to offer a resistance. Saw Rocky 4 movie yesterday, quite a morale boosting in such environments.

Past one week has been very peaceful, played rather learning tennis, no hashish, workout and sleep. Reading the digest of service and trying to pick up pieces of last twelve years of Tochi Scouts history. Two new officers have been posted here Captain Bilal of Air Defence and captain Saad of Signal Corps, both are good and courteous especially I am very impressed with the conduct of Bilal, I am sure both of these will go very high in army. As a matter of fact all the four officers Ammad, Billa, Saad and ... are very good better than my own generation I believe. Major Ali Raj is also here, I met his Balti batman other day happy to see him, I also met another soldier of 5 Squadron, he came to see me, one feels very elevated when old soldiers comes to say hello.

Tochi Scouts as usual is in fine shape, Commandant Wajahat, Major Zamir, Lt Col Rab Nawaz, Tariq, Captain Ali the doctor. I feel very comfortable and happy to see the JCO's, I met Fazal an Orakzai, best is the SM Zulfiqar a Orakzai I believe who is always very cheerful. Havildar Muhammad Shah is going for a promotion cadre next week. I myself is going to Sadda on this Sunday. Brigadier Shahid of Artillery is another very courteous officer.

Presence of Major General Ali Abbas is a strength, I had a juma prayers with him today and then long talk on religion, he is also like so many others think of me as a ripe fruit for conversion into religion, let's see what happens next, I have returned his loan of 6000, I know it won't matter much to him but to me it hurts, yet this is one lesson that I have learnt from my mother to keep your dignity intact by returning the loan.

I have Old Spice after shave and Brut roll on, one reminds me of Reena and other of Samina, in the morning I think of both when applying them. At times I feel the heartbeat of my daughter next to me, I think of my son Salik when I play tennis or watch cricket. I have no emotion left in me it seems, at times I think what am I, where am I, what am I doing here and then I shrug of all these feelings. To me time has not moved rather it has stopped, I am still in illusion as my family is waiting for me back home and I am here on a duty or a posting but this is all illusion.

There is no post office here and even PA was not in picture about it when I went to his office yesterday to have some data and neither can I have a weapon license from him so that is another deadlock.

Weather is fine and as I said earlier the night was beautiful indeed. There is peace outside now, it is 0200 hours now and let me get some sleep now.

## 22 September 2012

I had little sleep and worried rather scared of the forthcoming event, the alarm in the mobile went on at 0530 and then the waiter came to wake me up, I had a bit of mental appreciation and there was only one scene coming up in my mind, a blown up car in which I am sitting; not a very bright idea to start your day. I had the option to simply say that I am not going and then go off for a sleep but in the end I hurriedly shaved, I am not using any foam rather the ordinary soap and it works perfectly well. Had tea outside on the bench. At 0610 Captain Saad came out bit late but it's okay. There were two vehicles parked in the mess area one a new Toyota Vigo and other two door Land Cruiser, there were armed Scouts in both. I was given the newer vehicle all to myself, I knew that Commandant has made sure that I travel in style and comfort. In normal scenario it would have been great but now I thought it from another angle that by sitting in this vehicle I become the prime target, any way after the parade state near the stadium vehicles moved, Captain Saad told me that my vehicle will be the fourth in this almost nine vehicles convoy including an ambulance. The driver was Mohammad Hussain an Orakzai.

I inquired about the purpose of the trip and it revealed that there is a track leading to Bandigar which needs improvement and Tochi had asked for the dozer but the 7 Division had insisted on carrying out the reconnaissance first to judge the merit, thus grade two officer {operations} Major Shahid and Lieutenant Faisal of 105 Engineers Battalion were also part of the convoy all in all we were over forty in numbers. The convoy was impressive in terms of fire power and grandeur, I felt the impact and on the other hand none can stop an IED or an ambush if carried out by the Taliban; that was my major and only worry. We took the route from the northern edge passing through the dusty training area of scouts where the recruits were practising for their pass out parade. Three drill instructors were busy in imparting the knowledge, recruits dressed in trousers and faded khaki t shirts were performing the usual chore of raising the leg as high as possible and then hitting it hard, they were wearing the camouflage soft sole shoes. The route leads out on the Miranshah – Ghulam Khan Road, the very first moment on the road or outside the defence perimeters are very tense. The procedure is that the leading vehicles dropped their men who protects the route and the last vehicle picks them up, I later learnt that the leading vehicle also carries the bomb disposal party but more about that later on.

This was my first time on this road, I have been watching it for last ten weeks from the fort, I saw the high mud bricks towers which are reportedly madrassah of Jalal Haqqani an operation was carried out here in 2002 and in preceding years it was punished heavily. The madrassah is on the west side in the green belt. By and large the general perception is that Haqqani is pro Pakistan, a good thing but you cannot be assure of that nothing evil will happen today. The first interaction with people is strange, I saw two boys going to school then more of the kids in colourful caps but all wearing militia uniform. Men were mostly wearing white dress all having beard and turbans. Few shops were open with fruits and vegetables and grocery, similar to any other scene in frontier, why I have not said Punjab is because Punjab is densely populated. Few of the men had long hair in Taliban style carrying weapons, mostly sitting and just chatting. The leading vehicle of our convoy had another task and that was to make sure that vehicles of locals are parked away from the road to keep a suicide bomber away. The scenery is rather wide it is not a narrow valley, road is generally okay it more of a track passing through the algid and ravines. I had conversation with the driver Hussain and we chatted about the operations he had taken part there was another guard in the rear seat by the name of Aslam and then two gun men in the rear open cabin. The area west of Miranshah through which I am passing now is called Saidgi and is known as Dande Plains, it is here that all the water channels pour out from the mountains and forms a large fan of water veins, since it is mostly dry thus there is no fear of flood but in case it rain heavily then there is a real danger. A dam has been constructed in Saidgi area to store the water.

I waved to all the men who were sitting on the road side or waiting in their parked cars which all are Toyota and non-custom paid and white in colour. I put my window glass down which were tainted and tinted. The people responded rather in a delaying action by either nodding their head or responding with their hand, it breaks the ice and atleast lessen my fear which now had subsided but still you cannot take anything granted here, there were few speed breakers where my anxiety would increase because speed slows down and gives ample time to anyone to shoot or ram his vehicle into us. I saw women for the first time, in all the three valleys that I have travelled this seemed more open, these were powindahs who were wearing very colourful clothes mostly red, ruby and dark blue long kurta and had a shawl wrapped around their face but they were the signs of life and colour in the otherwise dreary scenery. I saw women sitting in the back of tractor trolley with men travelling towards the Miranshah probably for medical reasons. There were camels and sheep and big powindahs dogs as well roaming around. There

were also tents pitched here and there also semi mud huts. This is Saidgai area, by this point we had travelled almost twenty minutes and I was more comfortable now yet the fear was there.

We passed through Dande Plains a stony area which is the bone of contention among the Daur and Wazir tribes. We reached Ghulam Khan and I was surprised at the close proximity it is only seventeen kilometres away from Miranshah, elevation is almost a thousand feet more than Miranshah, since the sun was on my right rising thus I concentrated on the west side and I found area and people different more dense as compared to the Boya, similarities are with Saidgi area near Idak. Ghulam Khan is on a height and then track drops down to the vast parking area of trucks, it is the last place where Afghan trucks comes from Afghanistan and Pakistan trucks from our side and both exchange goods here very few travels beyond this point.

I had the option of either staying at Wing HQ or moving forward towards the Bandigar, I opted for Bandigar, I asked Hussain as to what is the meaning of Bandigar and his answer was that in Pashto Bandi is a shrub from which charas is made and I rejected the explanation as no charas is made here probably it is an Persian word.

The track leading to Bandigar is stony, it drops down considerably and we had to cross an algid which was running with water, saw few boys swimming in it, we then had to climb up through a steep with sharp bends track. The convoy stopped for the engineers' reconnaissance, we all remained idle for ten minutes, there was a motorcycle with two riders both natives and I could feel their anxiety as they were surrounded by over forty armed men taking pictures of the area after some time they were allowed to proceed further. Where we were standing there was a nomadic house down below where a woman was busy in preparing something and she kept on doing what she was doing earlier. Frontier Works Organisation FWO is making a road that will connect the Bannu with Ghulam Khan and onwards to the Khost in Afghanistan it is very important project and Army chief General Kayani announced and opened the project in July 2011 in a Jirga in Ghulam Khan the completion date is July 2013. It is very risky and dangerous task as the builders and labourers are all exposed to the firing but this by itself explains the tribal culture that the Gurbuz Tribe in whose area the road is being constructed has shown no hostility because this is already bringing the prosperity in terms of labour and will further enhance the trade. The labourers are mainly from Lakki Marwat area and the establishment of nomadic camps is also related to the construction of road. Day was hot but work was going on. This was a very route for the smugglers and it was occupied by the scouts in 2002. During this halt I observed the drills of the squad they all were out of their vehicles and faced towards the east because on west there is a high ground. I inquired about the water bottles and Hussain told me that they have been issued with it but none carries it. Thus we all had no water at all, I pointed out to him how important it is to carry the water on body as anything can happen, and he nodded in affirmation.

We drove forward now I had the Major Rashid as the co passenger I vacated the front seat for him, we army officers are very touchy about this protocol, a serving officer definitely gets priority over a retired officer so I had no qualms over it and this gesture made him comfortable. He had done a year course in bomb disposal in America thus I asked him to explain me the nitty gritty of the bomb disposal. He highlighted that as per teaching you cannot clear more than a kilometre of the track in a day but we do almost hundred kilometres a day. I in my heart of heart had always been praising the bomb disposal parties because the leading two men who actually perform the mission require nerves of steel to carry out

this operation. The procedure is that a jammer vehicle is also operating with these two men which jams remote control signals not always successful, then there are different kinds of IED like one which is timed related and then it can be pressure operated where the weight of your step can detonate it so it is very risky and not fool proof that is why it makes these bomb disposers very special people, I confessed my appreciation for Corps of Engineers they really perform miracles.

The track which we were following is not the original track rather it was made after occupation of the area by the Scouts, there are remnants of other tracks on the eastern side down below, and area is similar to the one around Abbottabad. Gentle slopes on the eastern side little greenery no high tree only shrubs which have come up due to rains in last month otherwise it is dreadful. Track is narrow with sharp bends an ideal place to lay an ambush. Saw three men walking down with a woman they again in my opinion are heading towards the Miranshah for medical reason, somehow the other there seems to be no other reason that comes to the mind when one sees a woman walking out other than this which I have stated. It is these walks among these rough areas that make these people tough.

There are remnants of old deserted Afghan refugee camps or it could be the sites of labourers who made this track. We reached the Bandigar post, the fort is a mile ahead. The track leading to the post has a very high gradient and the space itself at post is not enough to have parking area for two vehicles thus we left one vehicle mid-way with guard and now myself, Major Rashid, Captain Saad and one subedar with a rough beard and manners reached the post. Vehicle was parked hundred meters below and we moved up on feet.

Bandigar Post is almost on the Durand Line, a small post which was built in 2003 initially it was manned by the Baluch Regiment but now wholly by Tochi Scouts. It is on a ridge thus had three layers of living and weapon trenches, on a nearby ridge is the heli pad. Scouts gave us familiarisation with the area in front are the Afghan posts which looks quite tide and built in a fort style having adjoining observation posts also. There is one recoilless rifle one 12.7 machine gun and rest all are the small arms. Water is brought up from below with the help of a mule which has a separate bunker. Fresh ration is provided once in a week by the contractor. Scouts immediately got one hen slaughtered for us, there is no electricity here but communication system seems to be quite good, it is in the form of wireless. There is a mosque built by these troops here, a kind of kitchen garden also where they have planted few vegetables which were shown to me. There is barbed fence all around but overall the post does not have any real chance of survival in front of a determined attack which by itself is not a real threat. The scouts have to go down to take a shower. The aim of the post is keep an eye on the Afghans. Miranshah is visible from here the long white strip of the airfield is an obvious landmark. Ghulam Khan and surrounding area is also open for observation as a matter of fact the location of the post and its sitting is good from observation point of view. It is standing here that I thought of the Third Afghan War when General Nadir Khan attacked MiranShah from this direction. I visited the cook house also because it is the most important place in any post. Cooks were charming and full of humour a trait which is present in all cooks. One of the cook narrated the time when Americans came here for liaison it was probably in April last year and then he showed me a picture of his with an American female officer in which he had his arms wrapped around her. After drinking tea which was not that good we all left and reached our vehicles from where we moved towards the Bangidar Fort and reached there in ten minutes, it is our last post in this sector. Located on a rather flat ground. The fort was built in 2004 and it is not a very impressive building when it is compared to the British era construction.

There is also a Khassadar building or post similar in design to the Scouts post, there is a school building also, sepoy T... told me that this was built entirely by the scouts themselves initially the school was in an open area and all teachers were scouts, he himself taught here for three years, I inquired about the numbers of students and he said over hundred were the students. Afghan posts are all visible from here, there are two villages located on both sides of the fort in the depression down below. The post subedar a Khattak narrated that on last eid rather in the Ramadan there was a woman in the village which drank anti mouse liquid by accident and she was brought to the fort by her relatives but we could provide her only with first aid however she was taken to the Miranshah but then she survived. They also fetch water from the stream with the help of mule however they have installed a water pump for this purpose, they also lack electricity. After having Mountain Dew we departed, the track has been improved at places by the scouts also. On our way back we stopped at Ghulam Khan which is the headquarters of No 6 Wing and commanded by Lt Col Faisal who belongs to artillery.

Ghulam Khan was occupied in 1975 and the whole compound was built later on, it is on a high ground rather on a ridge and overlooks the area, Miranshah is also visible from here and so are the adjoining areas. The main task of this wing is to keep an eye on the Afghans. It has come under attack only once in last ten years which again highlights the demographic layout of the war against terror and its repercussions. We had a fantastic breakfast at 1200 hours, crispy puris and halwa. The wing is raised with new raising instructions thus it has an authorised strength of 900 Scouts although at present it has only 600 but the authorised strength is 900.

We then drove down towards the Zero Point, where the Pakistan and Afghanistan border meets. Ghulam Khan gives the look of any medieval town where instead of horses are trucks. Afghan trucks were all of Mercedes make few were Hino also, they are also decorated in the same style as Pakistani trucks are, almost over hundred were parked, the petrol pump is a Pakistani {PSO} run company, there is also custom check point which imposes tax and collects it also from trucks, there were 28 customs personals posted here. FC is not allowed to carry out the anti-smuggling duty but yet they are bound by letter to monitor the situation which gives them a leverage to inspect any truck. Lt Col Faisal highlighted his routine, the on-going construction of road. We reached the mid of the town where there are few shops and hotels, drivers sitting idle, there was no hustle bustle that is associated with border towns like Chamman or Torkham. We have to cross a stream which is wide and had water flowing in it, it is the presence of this water which explains the parking of so many trucks at Ghulam Khan, because even our own four wheel drives had problem in crossing it, there were men who were performing **abolutions** for prayer in its muddy water and few boys were taking showers too. Our last post is located almost two hundred meters on the far side of this stream. We had a tea and also a briefing regarding the Zero point. There is a constant dispute going on regarding the actual position of the Durand Line rather the alignment of it. There were bench marks which were erected in the original marking and demarcation of it in 1895 but on my inquiry as to where is the location of the bench mark is, there was a general ignorance of its presence. I pointed out to them that it is even given on the standard maps as well and only from it that one can align it self. I was told that in May an American helicopter came in about which we had no prior knowledge, it is the same incident which Captain Ammad also narrated to me when he was performing the duty of acting wing commander here. Although the Americans had given the flight information to the Islamabad and corps was in picture but division and brigade did not know about it, it was potentially another Salala Post disaster in making but only the rational thinking on part of scouts saved the day. Coming back to the Durand Line the issue is regarding the actual alignment, Afghans claim the zero point



to be part of their territory which we deny. There is a check post here few meters away from Zero Point but without any barrier or gate, FWO intends building one here on the pattern of Torkham and Wagha.

The real issue is the crossing of the stream as we saw today that with a little water it becomes an obstacle for commercial vehicle thus without construction of any bridge it will remain a thorny issue. On another level there is nothing illogical in accepting this stream as the Durand Line at least here in this sector. It is I think this point which is the bone of contention because by accepting this stream as the alignment of border the area of Bandigar also becomes part of Afghanistan. Which apparently is not acceptable to Pakistan.

### 23 September 2012

A normal day which I spent going through the books and in the library, Tochi has a very fine library and perhaps the only library where I can have tea and a smoke together. Sitting in the library glazing at all the books ranging from Russo – Japanese war to magazines I cannot resist but to recall the other two great libraries in fact three, the university of Glasgow, university of James Madison and National defence university, the last library is the most dysfunctional in nature as it has nothing, not even a genuine window programme. Glasgow is the most impressive and JMU is the most cooperative. But coming to this small mess library, I noticed that on one of the shelves the RAF Lib is still painted in white, to me it is a great discovery as it confirms that nothing has been changed in this library in last sixty years, because had there been any change they would have changed it into at least PAF but retaining the RAF simply means that where as modifications have taken place in all parts of the fort and mess this has escaped the eyes of all commanders, a sad reflection in a different perspective.

Pakistan played its first T20 match at Pallekelle and won it by 14 runs, they batted well and I left it after their innings was finished and went to the tennis courts but the pickers were not there probably watching match, the game was on on the clay court, did little bit of weight lifting and then came back to room. I had all the intentions of calling Reena but then laziness took me over. Last night in dreams I saw my wife and for hours I was mesmerised by her thoughts, I recalled how nice she was to me and how untiring she worked, I feel guilty and remorseful, saw my daughter and son in dreams and it makes me very weak in heart. I went to Ali Abbas room but he was asleep thus I left the laptop with his batman, I had been invited by him for a tea break at 1100 hours at his office but I have to leave tomorrow for Bannu thus I rang his staff Lt Col Umar who was very polite and insisted on my staying back but it is not possible that I should stay or even delayed the convoy for a tea break. Later at night I read the account of Naib subedar Sher Alam Khattak, a sixty pages account dating from his induction in scouts in 1990. It reminds me of the diary of Sita Ram that was published in 1860 and to date remains the only account of a native officer of military service under British, Sher Alam's account is no less interesting and it has happened with Sita Ram it needs editing. The salient feature of Sher Alam's account is the fact that he maintained a diary all these years. He highlights how he joined the scouts what was the affair of the Hiace from Bannu – Miranshah {it was Rs 12 in 1991} why Haji Saadullah is known as Haji Murghi and the events of war against terror, he was present at Data Khel when 54 rockets were fired in one single day in July 2007 and also the convoy that had two ambushes and two IED's it had to face in the same month while moving from Data Khel to Miranshah in same month. I noticed one very interesting fact, Sher had noted how much money he has been sending to his home and he has been sending Rs 10,000 to his father to run the house and Rs 1000 to his mother and Rs 2000 to his wife, thus these Pathans like any one else loves their wife more than they do to their mother, an interesting fact. His account gives a social insight into the

ordinary life pattern of the scouts , how they live, how they interact with each other, mre will be written about his account inlater days.

At the dawn of new millennium there was little change in Tochi Valley from the previous millennium other than the electricity and roads which brought certain fragments of civilisation. The most visible signs of civilisations seen in the agency were the new weapons; AK-47 Kalashnikov automatic light machine gun being the most favourite followed by shoulder fire Rocket Propelled Grenade Launcher-7.

## 24 September 2012

I am sitting at Bannu Tochi Serai, I came from Miranshah in the morning with Captain Saad in a hired Toyota car an old model with the convoy. I met Ali in the morning at his room he was getting ready for the office , I thanked him for the tea break invitation and then at 1100 hours we left , Mohammad shah is also leaving for Bannu as he has to go for the promotion course at Jalozai. There was a usual chaos at the Road operating day ground, a dusty ground with over twenty vehicles. The driver a Tori Khel Wazir of sixty years of age was talkative and disgruntled person , a cribber of highest order and I had to give him a shut up call and also to check his speed. But by and large I talked to him and updated myself on the area. Contrary to my own knowledge the area down below Miranshah till Bannu is not inhabited by the Daurs rather on the west the area is under control of Wazirs, different clans and on east is inhabited by Daurs with intermingled pockets of Wazirs in between. As we left Miranshah the first town is Aisha Post, then Spalga the village of Ipi and then Idak , I was shown the high mud fort of NWF which is still functional it seems, then Mirali and finally we entered into Bannu Frontier Region which is all occupied by Bakka Khel { Wazir}. Weather was hot and dusty and as such I think the qualities of pictures might not be that good. FWO was all working and after having visit the Bandigar I am deeply impressed by them, I saw them working in excessive heat on the making of road and supervising it. Over all the entire road is broken and most of the time we travelled on the dusty track, luckily the tyres of the vehicles held their ground. Also saw the powindahs with their camels, these camels mostly the young siblings tend to travel in the middle of the road where as the mature ones were mostly busy eating the shrubs. Army was deployed enroute but still I think it is not enough. It was sad to see the troops sitting the rear of hired trucks without wearing any helmet and with their clothes hanging . We were checked twice but that took place in Bannu FR for the reason that we by that time became the leading vehicle courtesy of Driver's fast driving. But it was gain only customary and lone soldier saluted Captain Saad without even checking his identification, a bad and dangerous culture.

Subedar Hidayat a Wazir is incharge of Bannu Serai a very neat, clean and efficient person , he has a beard but without any moustaches. I requested him to get me Mazari cloth , which he promptly went and bought and also bought the Bannu Woollen cloth , but the Mazari is not original and woollen cloth I am afraid is not enough for me to make a suit, but he will get it changed. Rang Ammad, Umar and Tiger. There was a miss call from father; it gives a lot of strength to know that at least he remembers me. In the evening I went for a walk with Saad to the cantonment.

Bannu cantonment as we walked past the rear headquarters of forward battalion, 12 FF , 28 Baluch and some odd Punjab Regiments, a sad commentary on their living, the area in front was abundant with wild growth, dirty barracks and even more dirty cook houses. This comes as no surprise because the area in the close vicinity of army chief's house in Rawalpindi presented the same scene in 2003; it has improved a little now. Bannu in good old days was supposed to be and was actually a recreation place for forward troops but now it is chaotic. It requires little effort to improve the living environments of the area but cutting the grass and planting the flowers and benches and overall having a more hygienic living. An army is not only known by the equipment it keeps but also through these aspects one can make out the morale of the troops. It was evening thus no need of light but I am certain that none can walk here at night and under any emergency it will be chaotic. Having said this the Bannu Cantonment gives the look of yesteryears of Peshawar cantonment, old trees wild growth of shrubs on path ways, vast expanse of empty grounds, old building structures. It was constructed in 1856 onwards and still few barracks are functional , although majority are of 1900 circa. We entered Combined Military Hospital area, a well kept and well lighted area, having a proper guide map with light, pleasant to notice it. My mind raced to my brother in law who served here in 2000. Area opposite the CMH is deserted in nature with two old barracks having verandah, these by their design looks to be the oldest in construction.

I had no intention of having the dinner but Subeadr Hidayat invited me have or rather joined their Dastar Khawan, these Scouts have very romantic names like Serai, Dastar Khawan and so on.. On the floor there was a long mat, with over hundred scouts sitting on both sides having their food, I was invited to occupy the head area. I am impressed with the cleanliness and standard of food, chicken and bananas with curd. I told Hidayat sahib that it is the best that I have seen so far in the Bannu cantonment and it is fact. Later after the food , he showed me the area, neat and clean washroom and above all a proper drainage system for the water waste of cook house, I am not off the mark if I say that it is the first time I have seen any cook house without cats loitering around and no standing water. He also showed me the room for the sweepers and believe me it has carpet and fan in it, something very rare in army.

Later I read and still is reading Line of Fire by General Musharraf , I have read it before but reading it again to update myself with the war against terror time line. Interesting account, it is nostalgic in nature as I have seen all this very closely and by reading his narrative my mind raced back to Samina when we would both discuss the events of the day . It took me back to the rotary wing crew room where Khalid Rana and myself were the only officers who would cut joke at his modern enlightenment, it all seemed yesterday but years have passed by now. Azadeh and Salik raced to my mind as we were in Gujranwala and Rawalpindi during most of his tenure. Not a bad president but then he himself admits that one needs to have a unity of command to govern this country. Otherwise his account is full of contradictions of character and history. I am more interested in his account of Kargil affairs which I think he is quite justified in claiming as victory but then again it is the political leadership which has to decide whether a country needs to have a war or not.

## 25 September 2012

1145 hours, we are stranded at Tangai Chowk , short of Karak, because our troop carrier vehicle an Isuzu small truck has developed a fault, it is heating up and it is due to the dysfunctional fan, a mistri is now working on it and Captain Saad has coordinated with the rear for a replacement vehicle, benefits of mobile telephone; it will take almost an hour and half for it to reach here. We are parked next to Daewoo bus stop opposite a CNG pump, weather is not very hot.

The journey from Bannu up till now is quite fascinating, as one comes out of Bannu and travels on the road leading to the Indus highway the area is absolutely flat , as flat as a billiard table, initially it has desert like terrain with date trees also but then on both sides of the road it is flat, fertile with occasional trees and sparse population, the main problem is lack of water, it is mainly the bed of old water streams which are wide and vast, it is sufficient enough to feed the entire Afghanistan. On a historical note Bannu area has attracted old Afghan rulers from 1000 AD onwards and after seeing it with my own eyes I am convinced that it is true, Sikhs also ruled it for long. After getting on at Indus Highway which is a very good road the scenery remains the same and it gradually that the scene changes with area becoming greener with more orchards and area becoming broken. The mountains also become visible on the right of the road and beyond the mountains is the Indus. Last time I travelled was on the road leading from Bannu towards the Kohat on the old road where the visibility was bit restricted. Our vehicle is now rectified and we intend moving on it forward.

2230 hours Thall Fort. Lying in Alizai room, the very fort where I came in 1992, fond memories of good ole days, I came in Alouette helicopter with Captain Rizwan Zalim, I was not qualified on the machine but acted as navigator, we picked brigade commander of Bannu and then came here and stayed the night or probably it was brigade commander of Thall Brigade I am not sure. I remember that I saw a tree planted by Fatima Jinnah , I saw it again, it has not grown up in all these years. Sat for hours in the mess lawn and watched birds of all kinds , ducks, peacock, pigeons, pheasants and also deer, beautiful wildlife caged and fed. Then came a horde of children of officers who played cricket and behaved not much different from the birds . Fun to watch them, mentally I saw Salik and Azadeh among them. Children are of all age and I travelled through the time line among them. I remember the time when I came here last, Samina was major then and we were staying in Corps Mess, wonderful memories of bygone days. I think I sat on the bench till darkness, when I was here last time I think I had hashish then but not now.

The journey from Karak onwards was uneventful , passed through the Lacchi home town of my friend Khattak, I have been here many times, then Kohat. We bought Guavas from a road vendor who were in line, Kohat is famous for them but I found nothing special in them. Samina's father was base commander here and I thought of her when must have been here and passed through the same road as I am passing now. Had a telephone call from tiger. The road is okay and scenery is good. The valley is wide and fertile with low level mountains running parallel. I passed through this valley in 1985 when I was a subaltern and my battery was deployed at Parachinar and today after a gap of quarter of century I am travelling again. Not much has changed in these years, the road was as good or bad as it is today and also the general layout is also same. One major change is the railway line, there used to be a narrow gauge railway on which I travelled then but now it has become extinct now. I noticed it from Kohat onwards, the track is broken and at places almost gone, a sad affair indeed.

We passed through the Shia and Sunni strongholds and these signs are visible everywhere, this area is always volatile in nature in terms of sectarian riots. The Shias have placed chalking highlighting their faith and equally I saw the Sunnis constructing grand mosques and tableghi centres being established this no way out, it will only enhance and fuel the fire. In Skardu and Gilgit similar situation prevails. The area is beautiful and its greenery and fertility is in sharp contrast to the barren nature of Tochi Valley. One is reminded of the early British era when Ross Keepels raised the Kurram Militia and moved forward, I thought of him how he must have rode in this area. The people are not that fiery or militant as

they are in Tochi, the major tribe is Orakzai and Turi, Turis are all Shias and Orakzais are mixed in faith. We passed rather bypassed the Hangu the most violent city after Parachinar. The Shias have built a beautiful and grand mosque on top of a mound, it is similar to the Mormon Church near the Washington when one is travelling on Highway 81 towards Virginia. Population density is more but still bearable, all in all the area also resembles the Islamabad in scenery and I wondered that only if the security is improved then an excellent and beautiful place to live. We were not carrying our haversack a bad habit among the scouts and soldiers, it used to be a standard pattern in eighties and nineties but I have noticed that these scouts are casual in nature, they were not carrying even water. Thus a long day without any edible, in good ole days they would have stopped at any place and bought their lunch but that is not possible in present security environments. Anyway Captain Saad had a stop at upper Darwazai a small town with a bank and bought some sweets and Mountain Dew, I am fed up of Mountain Dew and prefer simple water which I am carrying in the vehicle. I hope Captain Saad will learn something from this venture, he is a technical graduate and have spent four years in a university and now serving in a corps signal unit and on attachment with Tochi Scouts, I am sure this attachment will go a long way in broadening his horizon, it helped me when I was a subaltern. You learn what to wear and what to carry and more important what to eat in such areas and then what is important to carry. The driver drives fast and bit reckless, they have a habit of blowing horn unnecessarily without having any regard for the vehicle in front whether it has any space to give to let him to overtake, a kind of cultural mindset, same habit was displayed by that civilian driver while driving us from Miranshah to Bannu, it is risky and they have to be constantly reminded of this but it requires time and constant monitoring. I have forgotten to highlight that at Karak where we were repairing our truck, we were approached by a civilian driver in a white Toyota car, he introduced himself as a retired military transport havildar of Khyber rifles and offered his help, he bought us Pepsi, so this is the kind of bondage one draws among the scouts and uniform personals.

We reached Thall fort at 1600 hours, and Captain Saad left and I stayed here. The fort is impressive one of the most impressive in nature, it has lot of resemblances in term of layout and construction atleast in terms of entrance with the Cherat Fort and also with Razmak. This fort and Razmak were constructed in same time period also Khaiaosora and spinawam were constructed in same time period that is post 1922 or more precisely in 1932. It is not easy to destroy a fort of such magnitude and strength. I have seen it from air and now from ground too. In 1992 I had visited an outpost also {picquets} which is magnificent in nature.

The mess has been renovated in 2006, which includes tiling and layout, it has as a matter of fact caused more damage than good, for instance my room now has sealed windows and I cannot have any access to fresh air and this have to rely upon the air conditioned, high ceilings have been done with false ceilings but over all you cannot renovate this mess, it was more classy in its original layout than now. Only Aitchison College in Lahore has the distinction of retaining the original layout from 1890 till now, rest all military establishments have become victims of personal whims and designs. I am not very happy with the Thall Scouts, the tea is not good, the attitude of waiters is pathetic, the flush tank of my room is broken and this speaks of only negligence of mess secretary. It is probably due to the high standards set by the Tochi that I am having such feelings otherwise in army aviation mess the sink which was broken in 2006 is still in the same condition in Room No 10 on ground floor.

I had a walk around the fort, this {Thall Scouts} does not observe retreat with a bugle. Another thing which I noticed is their faded insignias at their entrance, too many paintings of Mrs Wajahat Malik adorning the mess giving it a look of a restaurant rather than a mess. Pakistan has won the T20 match against the Bangladesh still Amir Sohail is having his sarcastic remarks, it seems the man cannot have any positive or good words and always see the dark side. Obama the Nigger spoke at UNO in which he said that no insulting speech can cause violence, it is freedom of expression that is why I am writing him as nigger, it is after all freedom of expression. He { nigger} is confused he cannot understand one simple fact that human reacts differently to different kinds of insult, after all the majority of homicides in world over are caused by the anger which we feel, it is this feeling which makes a soldier go and launch himself on an enemy. If I take his freedom of expression philosophy on its face then what stops the Wazirs to demand the expulsion of the Americans or the mullahs to instil the sense of jihad in people. But to the Nigger only the American version and principles are the only thing that are correct and rest of the world is ignorant and as such cannot decide any thing of their own. It is this attitude which caused two great world wars and will surely lead us to another unless and until we start respecting the varying cultures. The Americans can have freedom of expression by portraying Jesus nude and with prostitutes in more grotesque manner but don't expect the others to have same tolerance level for their prophets and unless we reach a compromise we will keep on having clash of cultures and civilisations.

### 26 September 2012, 1855 hours.

Sitting rather lying in the wing headquarters of No 1 Wing, it is a old room a proper old room constructed almost hundred years in the traditional pattern of the natives with mud plastered walls, roof is made of wood lumbers and sticks of local trees which I have been told is very strong and is used instead of cement, it is creaking, the room is like the Shigar Fort room but it is original, I had the option of staying in Lt Col Qaiser's room which is rather new construction but I prefer staying here.

In the morning I was up by 0730 the water was cold, tea luke warm and toast stiff. I gave my piece of mind to the waiter called for bill, paid it {Rs 192 for meal and service charges} and sat in the lawn watching the birds. Peacocks wee out and ducks fighting as usual as yesterday, pigeons were not seen. Ducks have a peculiar habit that all of a sudden one or two out of them will pick a fight among themselves and then they will run wild. I read in Musharraf's book that during his meeting with Chinese head of state, the Chinese gave him a piece of advice regarding the investors that investors behave like pigeons, on the first sign of danger they all fly away but when the trust is restored then they will come one by one. I observed it yesterday and found it absolutely correct. Later I went to the CMH merely because the hospital reminds me of my wife Samina. I went to second in commands office a Major Raja, a courteous officer, I requested him that I want to the pictures of AMC badge painted outside the hospital. He candidly asked for my identification which I gave then he went to his commanding officer's office rather acting because the real one is in Peshawar, later he came and politely asked me whether I have taken any other pictures in the fort which I replied in affirmative. I was enjoying it because I knew that the classical military security system is now working, he has gone to his CO to inform him and get his permission who in turn had asked him to contact the brigade, as he rang DAA & QMG who was not in his chair, I cheerfully asked him that I don't need the pictures and then we both had a laugh and later after having a cup of tea I left, subedar ... was waiting for me outside I was happy to see a Tochte.

We later went towards the brigade to fetch the ration, subedar was anxious and said that he can come again as I am getting late but I assured him that I have all the time in world so take your time but I

should not be the excuse for you to come here again, he understood the message and later dropped the idea that it is not important. All the scouts without exception were busy in using mobiles, my driver said that since mobiles are not working at Sadda thus they all make full use of it here. I took more pictures of the fort and later we drove out from the Thall.

Thall was bustling with life vendors selling items on the roadside, rows of Suzuki pickup waiting for the passengers, food being prepared, nothing has changed here in last two decades. Scenery very green and area fertile and population quite dense. We drove in a convoy one in which I was sitting other carrying scouts with a machine gun mounted { mine also had the same } and third was the civil pick up carrying three mules and two donkeys. Road is fairly good, the valley opens up and is very wide, I could see the snow clad mountains in the far distance, the very first snow of the season. The towns are again classified as Shia and Sunni, some of the towns are built on the banks of the river and are really old and some on the side of road which have new construction. All along I noticed khassadars and levies at regular distance, system is working. I was keen to see the gate of Kurram Valley which is known as Kharlachi, I saw it on an old sketch with a note that names to be entered here but driver told me that it is still away. Boys and children coming back from school wearing militia uniform, I am again distressed at the change of Scouts uniform from militia dress, it looks odd in this environment. The police also wears the same dress at certain places so quite a confusion, I waved hands to all. The traffic is quite dense, Toyota Hiace plying between the Kohat and Parachinar, quite a number of women among them. I have noticed that the women are more frequent in this valley, also saw few boards announcing the uplift area and projects of European Union but it is like salt in flour, surprisingly all the boards are in new conditions without any graffiti. On the other hand uncountable graffiti in favour of Maulana Fazal Ur Rehman and quite a number of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf flags. Graffiti and slogans of all kind but almost all are religious in nature less PTI which aims at corruption also saw few flags of PPP but no mention of the premier or president. One slogan aims and claims that we will instill the hate against Americans in all the children. We finally reached the Gate to Kurram Valley an impressive gate with plenty of khassadars, they are mostly very young in age, fair colour and gives innocent looks but people obeys them. Our JCO was quite arrogant with the natives during road jams and bottlenecks, it is difficult to teach them that this is not the way to win the hearts and minds of people which in any case he is not pushed or cared about. In the agency none is carrying weapon and all in all people looks quite docile in nature. We passed the Arawali Fort another fort of grandeur and having an air strip I believe. Arawali was quite famous during the Afghan war, Captain Rizwan Now Brigadier stayed here with the newly acquired Stinger missiles in 1985. Now we were in Sunni dominating area after Arawali comes Sakhi Ahmad Shah Kalle then Shashu K, Shastu, Warsak Kalle, Durrani Chotta and finally Sadda. It is as usual as it was in 1985, the kebabs were being fried and I have only this memory of this town of old journey and I noticed the same today as well. The square in Sadda is named as Emir Mawaiyyah, a controversial figure in Islamic history, naming a square with a high monument after his name is like showing a red flag to a bull. Shias hate none more than him and to me it is inviting them rather throwing a gauntlet to them, inciting them and during Muharram it is like adding petrol to a fire. We turned right, there is vast tent city on the plains which used to be old Afghan refugee camp it is now being used as a camp for displaced people of Daddar. We had stopped at one of the No 1 wing post near the degree college. There is a road block with a female warden present along with a male, she was all covered in veil.

A classic road and track journey from Sadda to Daggar where the wing headquarters is situated. Mud plastered villages hosting the black and white stripes flag with one odd Pakistan flag in between.

Shops were opened , the names changed here like Mamozai. I am not sure about the demographic nature of the area. We followed a road which runs parallel to Khurmana Nullah, road is at quite an elevation , area is lush green and fertile, occasional traffic comprising of pick ups and cars mostly non custompaid having FATA number plates. As we made ingress into the valley the area becomes more open, only one odd bottle neck but still plenty of ambush sites. Houses are all mud plastered and we passed through them with children waving including small girls, it is almost similar to the area close to Skardu and beyond it. If only the security issue is taken away then this place is tourist paradise. We crossed the Khurmana Nullah at Dwa Toi and finally reached Daggar, it is situated next to the algaad on high ground. The very first person I met was the subedar major Ashna Gul the same very person whom I met at Boya while he was unceremoniously being sent to the No 1 Wing. From road the track leads upwards in a steep ascent , I was bit scared but driver assured me and we reached the top. Parked the Toyota single cabin and walked further up where the Wing Commander Lieutenant Colonel Qaiser of 52 Cavalry was standing. A chubby officer with a short beard, he welcomed me I fully understand that any serving officer is always bit apprehensive about a retired officer who comes to his kingdom and is senior in service but junior in rank but after a smoke, thanks he smoke we talked about the project and I gave him a run down addressing him as sir. I found him a pleasant company , energetic and having positive attitude towards the life, service and what all he is doing here. He immediately took me on a drive towards the Dakka Pass which is quite near and we passed through the Daggar village . He was driving himself and we had a full escort, the village was once a flourishing place but now in half ruins.

This part of Kurram is known as Central Kurram and is part of Orakzai Tribe with Mamuzai sub clan inhabiting the area, the operation to clear the area is code name as Operation Mamuzai.

Qaiser took me to the edge of the road where it finishes and turns into a track with a pass known as Dappa Pass. I saw two old women walking on the other bank of Khurmana nullah, it immediately brought back the reflection of Skardu and adjoining valleys. We were in the hostile area with chances of fire coming from anywhere quite bright, neither myself nor Qaiser were wearing any protective jacket but our escort was fully armed and they walked ahead and fanned the area. Qaiser showed me the Chile Sar peak , a major operation took place here in January 2012 in which this wing occupied the whole feature in one night a reminiscence of Iblanke Ridge operation of 1939. We stayed for time a quiet and beautiful place, water is muddy and fast flowing. We drove back and from Daggar village we turned towards the Khurmana Nullah and crossed it quiet a feat with fast flowing water , a tribute to Toyota car manufacturer. We climbed up and followed a dusty track and drove up and up and Qaiser told me that how this area was cleared of insurgents and how he established his post here in one night and later the post came under 22 attacks in a span of two weeks in which two scouts were killed and many more injured. We stopped near the Sammu killi post , it had started drizzling and I was amazed that all the scouts had the rain coats including one for me. Qaiser noted my appreciation and said that he had got 300 of these raincoats made from wing fund and then stitched them according to his requirement having a zipper and buttons as well. The post subedar came down he looked in quite a high morale fully armed and dressed. I saw the bullet holes and later we all turned back and drove to our headquarters adopting a different track yet we had to cross the nullah. We passed through the village and reached our post which is known as three pimples. Had a hearty lunch comprising of rice and chicken curry and then green tea and a smoke. Qaiser offered his prayers while I just ventured upstairs and stepped into the field mess, The mess havildar Rafique introduced me to his staff and later I came to know that he had taken part in



the Swat Peration of 1995 I shared some of my knowledge with him and we agreed to have a another sitting to get his personal views on that operation.

Qaiser and myself alongwith Rafique climbed up to the command post which is nothing more than a tent and few bunkers at the top from where I had a good view of the whole valley and later his one staff NCO who had atkenpart in the Cahlo Sar operation gave me the account. The valley is divided into two wings which both joins together provided if you cross the nullah . The no 1 Wing was inducted here from Dir operation in October 2011 after travelling a distance of 550 kilometers , they had covered an equal distance from Miranshaha to reach the Dir and after taking part in Chitral Opearitions moved here. Initially they had one month training at sadda and tahl where Qaisr practiced the firing nad other field crafts and then they came here at Three pimples. It was the start of phase two of the opearitions. In the first phase the lower Kurram Valley was cleared from the miscreants rather the Orakzai Agency was cleared. The agency does not share any physical contact with the Durand Line. The miscreants actually gathere here from Khyber and Kurram Agency and Daggar became their centre point. They started living here and offered resistance to any ingressing force. The very first time when qaiser's wing came here it was stoned by the locals still a far cry from the Tochi and wazirs where the same welcome would have been in the form of small arms fire. Over all the area and agency looks not as militant as tochi, they don't carry arms and weapons , houses construction is not as fortified as there, before the incoming of army and scouts there were schools but overall the agency remained secluded. I saw women folk walking or looking after the animals although covered but not ina shuttle cock burqa. Daggar village was the arms purchasing centre but now all the shops have nbeen destroyed. No 1 wing ahd the responsibility to occupy the both ridges and high features astride the Kharmanna nullah . The features are not steep rather gentle and are in layers with thick jungle at places and also having the bald green patches. Talibans were living and are still living on the high features and some of them have been cleared but not all thus there is always a chance of them attacking. The posts are at height in excess of 8000 feet which is the snow line. They got the first snow in januray 2012 by that time they ahd cleared and occupied the features.

Later at night I had the dinner at qaisers bunker, Biryani and curry alongwith potato cutlets and curd and ending with green tea. Saw the television but I requested him to change the channlel as I have no stomach for the Geo and other bizarre channels which have nothing but sensation and pessimisim. Saw pictures on Qaiser's comouter , only some of them are worth printing in the book.

My roof is constantly creaking and I am not sure where is the toilet and where is the awsh room. This bunker is reminiscent of old ack ack adys of Sargodha and paarchinar. Clothees hanging ona wire, books lying around, this is the bunker of a captain whi is on leave, same old stuff Dale Carnegie's 'How to win friends and influence people' a copy of John Grisham's ' The partners' a copy of religious prayers, few medicines. I cannot make out whether the occupant is married ora bachelor but this much I know that he is also from cavalry. A pedestal fan, a prayer rug, a small wall hanging mirror, steel helmet, telescope, bullet proof vest but no weapon is in sight. Two energy saves are hanging from the roof, room or buker has a green carpet an old mess of mass electric wires, a small window, two tubular cots , I am using one of them , sorry I have a wooden bed with foam mattress. The size of bunker is ten by ten, there is a adjoining room also and then stairs that leads up, all mud built and thenoutside stony sloopy ground. It was a local house which remained under use of Kurram Militia and now under Tochi. Outside weather is cloudy and chilly with drizzling.

### 27 September 2012, 0945 hours

I was up at 0700 hours but remained in the bed, night was calm initially there were few sounds of firing and I thought here I go again but then I wandered into sleep, I had a thought that in case if the roof collapses then what are my chances of survival. In the morning I rang field mess on inter com number 812 for a cup of tea, the waiter brought it and spill it luckily the computer was saved. Then another attendant came and informed me that warm water is ready for a bath, I inquired about the location of washroom and he informed me it is next door. I went there it is a bright and sunny day, it is only meant for taking shower but not for toilet, I searched around and a sweeper in khaki kameez shalwar came shook my hand and then guided me to the toilet, it is bit far away, eastern style with corrugated sheets and semi open. The air was filled with the sounds of children reciting their lessons in near by school. Later I took shower and now had my shave in the bunker with just a razor blade no soap or water. I am waiting for my clothes which the attendant has taken down for pressing with the help of a coal iron

2300 hours. The power supply is off, there is electricity provided by the government but it is erratic but not as bad as in Punjab during summer. The wing operates its own generator from 1900 – 2300 hours same as in Boya. I just watched two fascinating games of cricket, Sri Lanka beat New Zealand and West Indies defeated England and it was in last match I saw a fascinating piece of fielding by Pollard when he saved a six by throwing the ball back into arena after jumping over the boundary line fabulous stuff. In the morning after I got my clothes back and I got them quick much quicker than in aviation mess Rawalpindi. I had breakfast with Qaiser under the fly, consisting of toasts and omelette and two cups of tea. We started recording the chain of events for which I have actually come here.

In July 2011 No 1 Wing moved from Miranshah to Dir and Qaiser took the command and on the third day of his command one of his soldier died while taking bath in the river. The wing was tasked to initially block the four passes leading from Afghanistan into Dir and they carried two search operations as well, nothing much happened but one platoon of 16 AK regiment was ambushed in which four soldiers were killed. Wing moved to the Thall on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2011 and after carrying out a month of training was tasked to clear the Daapa Valley in conjunction with 16 FF and 42 Punjab, corps commander and IGFC held durbars and raised the morale of the troops. Now this 42 Punjab is my regiment in a sense that I served with them at Siachen and their commanding officer of that time is working in Islamabad and I usually meet him quite often.

This valley is wide with the dead end coming at the Dappa Pass which is flat cutting and from here the track leads to Tirah the stronghold of Afridis. The village where I am sitting now is known as Tappi Killi and wing headquarters is located at higher ground known as Three Pimples. From here if I look on the west then the ground opens up with green fields and after a kilometre or even less it joins the Kharmanna Nullah, across the nullah is another built-up and then a low level mound which runs towards the south. In the east is rather high plateau which leads towards the south, across the Dappa Pass the Cheelo Sar feature starts which is steep from this direction, it has two parts, the lower part is known as three mounds and then it rises up and moves towards the west in a crescent shape and joins with the low level mound forming a saddle. No 1 Wing had to occupy the Cheelo Sar and that too at night. Qaiser formed two groups of fifty scouts each. Dappa Pass was cleared by the 16 FF and low level mound by the 42 Punjab. Taliban were reported at the peak of Cheelo Sar. It was a tough climb at pitch dark night but they managed to reach the three mounds by first light without suffering any casualty they were fired upon but not heavily. Next day they moved further up and cleared the rest of the feature. Later they came

under attack from the Taliban but not a serious effort yet they managed to hold the post and this is the situation now, wing has 24 posts scattered in 64 square kilometres area. This is the story.

The real stuff starts now as how these posts are fed and are supplied with ration and water, this is where the donkeys and mules come in who daily provides them with these items under a protection party but I am surprised that as to why these logistics run are not stopped by the talibans. The normal administrative activities are also managed like leave and casualty evacuation and holding of certain exams which are important for the promotion of scouts to next rank. Fresh ration is supplied after ten days which in turn is moved up the posts. In Boya it was stopped by the talibans for six months till peace pact was not signed there. I personally think that Taliban threat is exaggerated in this area as this area is not militant in nature.

Later we had discussions on wide ranging topics on which we differed. After lunch I had a cup of tea with the headclerk while sitting on a roof top. In his opinion the area is not that militarised, the people are not that hostile, he had been to Gilgit and he narrated me how he was impressed by the honesty of them. In his observation the women of this area are not treated fairly, they all worked in the fields look after the domestic animals and breed children. Majority of the men of this particular village are abroad and those who are here do not care much about their women to support his logic he gave the evidence that he has never seen the men while coming back from Sada carrying any fruit for their families even in holy month of Ramadan. He had travelled many times in civil transport with them and had seen them eating in bazaar but not caring to bring the same for the families, another point which he raised was that there is no butcher's shop between Sada and this village thus people have low nutrition diet. I am impressed with his observation.

Sitting at top I observed the village down below and saw women working in their houses, the houses are built very close to each other there seems to be no tactical consideration in this rather saving of space seems to be primary value. I also moved towards the two mules who were eating their fodder with a animal transport soldier listening to radio next to them. I inquired about the nature of mules as I have developed respect for this animal. Mule cannot reproduce, they are brought from remount depot Sargodha and are trained at Nowshera and then they are allocated to Frontier Corps. These two mules have been brought from Miranshah day before yesterday, A Mule has a service tenure of 15 years after which he is no more of any use, it is very hard working, it can only draw back that by nature he is stubborn and if he decides to stop in middle then no power on earth can move him forward that is why they are always move under supervision towards posts. They are used for action and carriage of ammunition upward to the post/ There are three donkeys here as well, donkey are simple in nature, once they are shown their route once they simply obey the orders without any reservation or ego thus they are sent upwards independently and used only for carriage of water. One of the donkey is just a child now, I wonder is he the same whom I saw at Miranshah on Mother's Day, he seems to be quite attached to his mother.

There is an old man here really old he lives in the mud hut next to me and I saw him in the morning, it is said that he is over hundred years and took part in the WW1, I am looking forward to meet him tomorrow let's see. In the evening I saw a woman shouting to someone at quite a high pitch, something very unusual in pathan culture. Qaiser and myself had dinner together, rice and lentil with cutlets, good and simple food. I observed that one of the scout and his wife admitted in hospital for delivery he got leave, another was granted leave for the sickness of his mother and another three were

granted the routine leave. All this were brought up by the BHM who also got signatures and approval on other issues.

### 29<sup>th</sup> September 2012

1725 hours, sitting in the bunker, since the roofs are made up of trees and planks thus it constantly creaks with occasional fall of dust, my head has plenty of it now, on the upper floor I think the barber and other staff is residing, on entrance there is a room for the mules and donkeys. The space here is vertical thus the available accommodation is being utilised fully. Weather is neither hot nor cold contrary to common perception the September and October are quite warm not only here but also in northern areas of Pakistan. Today being Saturday is a non working day although the distinction between working and non working is very thin line in operational area. Yesterday being Friday was a quiet day, I sat with Lt Col Qaiser in his room almost whole day, we had breakfast and in between there was a constant flow of telephone calls, some one asking or reporting about movement of troops, movements, shortage of ration or surplus of ammunition on a particular post, leave of scouts, rotation around the posts. Qaiser has a complete grip on the situation and is energetic and takes lot of interest. He called all the appointment holders dealing with uniform, the wing has received almost 400 track suits from Miranshah, they have been made by Colonel Wajahat with Lt Col Rab Nawaz looking after the project, it is a multi million rupees project, half of the amount is being paid by the headquarters and scouts are paying only half {Rs 600} it includes track suit, shirt and a cap but no shorts. We also saw the Pakistan and South Africa match, at the end of South Africa's batting the electricity went off and I came to my bunker. Shortly I received telephone call from the signal operators requesting me to request the Qaiser to start the generator but I politely declined, any way soon Qaiser on the request of subedar major Ashna Gul gave orders for the generators to operate. The mess havildar and few clerks came to my bunker to attend the agma and I welcome them. Pakistan were 76 for 7 wickets when almost all left less three and miraculously Pakistan won thanks to hard hitting of Umar Gul. This cricket is the major unifying factor in Pakistan, in this remote area with war going on the win lifted the morale, it crossed the boundaries, we all were one and passed comments and criticised the players but in the end the victory elevated us. During the match there are lot of advertisement and it is sitting with troops and conservative patrons that one realise how a advertisement can either have positive or negative impact. Any nudity or even touching of bodies among men and women, cosmetics, relationships all plays decisive role. Later at night India was thrashed by the Australia which added icing to the cake.

Today in the morning but first let me enjoy the dream which I saw, I was with my family, I saw my son and daughter playing in ice, I saw my wife cooking food but when I opened my eyes none was there. I thought of how last year I was in America with Reena at Virginia, the cold and chill in the air, the small window through which I would look at the Port Republic Road.

I sat under the fly with such mixed feelings, later Qaiser came, oh I forgot to mention that it is quite an exercise to attend the call of nature here and then shaving but both have to be attended. The toilet seat is eastern in nature with partial close door, open air from top and risk of shells coming any time. Shave I am doing dry just using the razor and nothing and that too without any help of mirror. There are few sweepers here thus no filth is seen, in the initial days of North Waziristan Militia the founding fathers made sure that every post should have a sweeper and cook. Later Qaiser took me on a long drive towards Jogi which is on other axis. We have to drive back almost twenty minutes and then cross the Sultani bridge and then drive on a dirt, stony ascending track with narrow width through an odd village amidst

men working and women carrying water in blue plastic carriers up. One escort Land cruiser with almost half a dozen armed scouts led in front, there is jammer in our vehicle which jams all frequency thus remote control IEDs can be avoided but not the pressure operated. I had opted to sit in the rear seat in order to save Qaiser the tension of driving but then he also sat with me in the rear and despite my best he refused to sit in front thus I had to sit in front and he drove.

The Taliban had two strongholds here one was in Cheelo Sar/Dappa area and other on the axis on which we are driving now. The Taliban do not resist in a conventional manner rather they simply live with the natives speaking and sharing same cultural and linguistic values and attack the security forces in a guerrilla style with small arms and exploding bombs, no suicide bombing has taken place here. In my opinion these are not as ferocious as in Tochi Valley. The army moved on Jogi Axis and cleared the area which means establishing the posts and attacking those villages from where the fire was initiated. In the end army was able to clear the area and handed over the posts to No 1 Wing of Tochi Scouts and also other wing of Kurram Militia is also operating in the area. These posts are often attacked by the Taliban by using fire and closing up trying to find any weakness in the defence but so far they have no success and despite being under constant attack these scouts have held the nerves. In terms of firepower the Taliban are no match to regular or scouts but it is their psychological impact which is dangerous and I think in this valley the scouts have the better of morale and nerves. Qaiser halted at the fire base which he had established at Jogi rather short of it. He has his 81 mm mortar, 14.5mm twin barrel gun and 37 mm single barrel gun on a high ground from where he can provide fire support to his posts at Cheelo Sar and at Sammo Killi. He had almost spent a week during peak operations on this post sleeping under an open tent. I was interested in taking pictures of these weapons to put it into the Tochi History book and Qaiser is more than helpful in this regard. First a dummy drill of mortar group and then few snaps of 14.5 and 37 mm. Qaiser offered me to fire both weapons which I initially resisted because it has been long that I fired these two weapons and had that internal fear that something will go wrong during firing but then I agreed. I fired a burst of seven shells from 37 mm, the fire is through a foot pedal and one has to press it really hard to fire the shot. The noise of fire is not deafening but certainly loud and bit of smoke comes out from the barrel. I am impressed with their drills and above all the way they handle the very concept of fire, it was a routine for them. Later I fired quite a number of rounds from 14.5 the same procedure, the fire is by pushing aside a plate with your feet and then pressing the pedal, the fire is devastating in nature, burst of rounds and the sound is again not deafening but loud.

I was a different person after firing and now have more respect for Qaiser not for the reason that he has allowed me to fire but the way he is taking this firing in real sense, a scout or soldier only gets confidence when he actually fires the weapon and not through long talks. When you give them this liberty when you trust them they respond. In my three years of military service with Allah I never fired so much of these weapons as I have fired here in one day. This liberty of action was not there in Afghan war and neither at Siachen. Thus the morale and output also vary with the number of rounds you fire. I am convinced that in regular army an officer must fire more of these heavy weapons. We get very high grades in weapon course but seldom an officer fires these weapons, even 12.7 is rare. There are always long safety drills, I can bet that very few officers of this army can actually assemble a 14.7 gun. This war has done good in uplifting these standards but still a long way to go. Another weapon of repute is RPG – 7, I have not fired it but what I have gathered about it in last three months speaks volume about it. It first came to lime light in 1973 Arab – Israel War when it was used by the Egyptians to hunt the Israeli tanks. In our scenario it is the most common weapon held by the Taliban, a fantastic piece of weaponry. I had

discussion with Qaiser and many others regarding the weapons, these weapons especially the 37 and 14.5 were declared obsolete by the army and new modern and high tech systems were incorporated but these weapons have proved their worth now. Their beauty and effectiveness lies in the easy and rough handling that they can take, for instance 14.5 was dissembled by the scouts and taken up to the higher posts on a simple Toyota land cruiser and same hold true for 37mm gun. One has to understand that arms manufacturers creates a myth through demonstration and papers in which countries are made to realise that their existing weapon system is obsolete and thus they are lure in to buy modern more expensive weapon system . Take the example of Oerlikon Gun System which simply cannot operate in such environments it requires a western battle conditions. Similarly the tank or armoured cars is another example, we have injected heavy and big tanks and writing off small scout cars in entirety, the result is that the big tanks have become a liability here, one tank was overturned in Sammo Killi, it was a miracle that the crew survived and while tank had to be extricated a big operation. The net result of all this is that there is a dire need to have a separate corps for frontier warfare which already exists in the shape of Frontier Corps, only it has to be supplemented with suitable weapons. What stops this FC to have its own armoured corps comprising of small tanks, have its own aviation corps, medical and signal. But the hard fact is that army will not let it have all of this. The regular army is too cumbersome too staff heavy to have any worth mentioning results. The success it has gained has come at a very heavy financial cost and in the face of real resistance as in North Waziristan it has failed to have any worth highlighting output.

I am supposed to leave this area tomorrow and head for Thall and then Bannu and from there to move towards Dera Ismail kahn and then to No 2 Wing at Gomal Zam but the wing commander there is on leave thus I will be staying at Bannu Serai. The cricket match between Sri Lanka and West Indies turned out to be one sided affair, England defeated New Zealand.

There is a repatriation going on in the area, almost 65 vehicles moved back into the area which has been cleared by the army and scouts. Qaiser was bit anxious regarding the late movement of these people because it creates administrative and security environments. Most of the vacant houses are under the occupation of scouts or military and during hours of darkness this relief in lines is quite sensitive issue. Since this is Saturday thus the number of vehicular movement among the civilians is quite high and they all have one excuse that they are taking their families for delivery cases. This is one aspect which works. In another case one person approached the Sammo killi check point requesting that tomorrow is his marriage and he wants to take his bride in a car beyond the check point , it was not granted. Tonight is full moon, it is a beauty, one can see the whole valley the silhouettes of mountains and tracks is visible. I saw and stared at the full moon while standing at the edge of a mound , by mere shifting of my position I can stare it through the high trees which are called ghunna here. A sentry was also standing and we chatted on many issues, the beauty of the moon, its effects on the humans, how terrorist can also make use of it, his experience in Dir area and the strength of the tree. He told me that this Ghunna is used for making Hull and in construction of houses. Somehow the other contrary to regular army troops one feels shy in talking about female to these scouts, it is something in the culture.

### 30<sup>th</sup> September 2012 Sunday

1230 hours. The constant movement up on the floor is causing regular dispersion of mud on my head. A sunny day, we had a photographic session today , almost all the scouts present wore uniform and we had a good photo session, my thanks to Qaiser. Unfortunately all the pictures were wiped out from the camera but luckily I was using two cameras thus I avoided Murphy Law in totality. Qaiser gave me an

opportunity to speak to the troops regarding the project which I did and had a clap from them. A Binjo car was seen approaching from Takht Sar are and Qaiser immediately gave the orders to have bursts of fire on both sides of car but explicitly ordering not to hit the car. It is these immediate, prompt and stern orders which not only ensure the safety of own troops but arise their morale and deter any adventurous undertaking from the terrorist, I am impressed by this display. The movement upward on the floor is a constant torture and there is nothing else to do other than to wait for the cricket match between Pakistan and India which starts at 1500 hours.

### **1<sup>st</sup> October 2012, Monday, 2100 hours, Bannu**

Lying in the Tochi Scouts Serai, reading the journal I wrote while travelling and staying in America and with that comes the Reena in mind, she has been very caring and loving since I have re-met again three years ago after a lapse of twenty years. It looks a fairy tale and it is indeed a fairy tale. I have the mobile lying next to me but I have switched it off, I have no call either with my father or mother or for that matter with any body, what is the problem with me, I run away from all the people who loves me, my heart is dead; it hurts, I have no idea what am I doing with my life other than spending and living on day to day basis. Just had a walk in the cantonment but it a dead cantonment, I wanted to see the cricket match but the waiter in station mess told me that TV had been taken to the Kohat for replacement, I don't believe him but then I simply walked away back to the Serai. Old haunted houses of british era, old trees and very few men walking. There is one house which is dubbed as Pride of HAT, 41 AK. I am not sure whether is regimental office or a residence. I walked and walked through the dusty road. I wondered that one time it was lively and full of life, incidentally I recently finished Mallam Leigh's account of Bannu he was a Deputy Commissioner here in 1930's. My mind was also occupied on the snakes because I think they are in plenty here and it was during this mental appreciation that I almost stepped on a frog, he jumped and jumped on my feet, I was wearing chappalls, luckily I did not shrieked.

Last night Pakistan lost the match in a pathetic manner, myself and Qaiser underwent lot of tension and stress, the food which included fish as well tasted badly in such circumstances, later we had a bit of talk on world history and then I walked back to my hut and slept restlessly. Qaiser told me that the bride which had requested for the car had walked on foot accompanied by fifteen men to her new house. He further highlighted that he had seen one of the houses from inside and these people have inbuilt bath system where the bedroom has a shower place with in it; quite a news, we both for some time contemplated on how it works. The telephone constantly was busy, he has a good telephone or communication system with all of his 24 posts, which are connected with Icom system working on VHF, he also has a HF set apart from a Sanao Chinese system which is linked with regular civil telephone system. There is no concept of post man, on my query as to what is the pattern of delivering mail to the posts, he replied that none writes the letters any more they use this communication system. For the delivery and receipt of official mail which either comes down from the brigade headquarters at Thall or from Tochi Scouts at Miranshah, he has deputed a despatch rider who collects it daily from Thall along with an Urdu newspaper 'Mashriq'. Leave is the key issue with scouts alongwith pay. The pay is collected from National Bank Sadda and then distributed to the company pay NCO's who in turn physically hand over to all the scouts at posts and get their signatures as well. The ration is another sour point especially during operation when the food was collectively prepared and then further distributed to posts employing mules. The scouts are not used to eating Meal Ready to Eat {MRE} thus these were used only once and emphasis is on providing fresh ration to every post, now all posts cook their own food. Qaiser is now working on how to cope with the forthcoming Eid leave which is less than month away.



Every one wants to spend the leave with their family but this is not possible thus he is working on the issue. Eid leave certainly poses a big dilemma and I am happy that I am not in Qaiser's foot.

In the morning after breakfast which for a change comprised of cutlets as well, two cups of tea, Qaiser presented me with a souvenir a shield and we both parted, I have high regards for Qaiser's professional abilities he is energetic and fair with a forward looking vision, a very religious person yet having a sense of humour .

The two car{Hilux} convoy drove out from Tabbi Killi at 1000 hours or slightly late, weather was fine, slightly hot, I was wearing a white T shirt and khaki trouser, all other were in full combat dress which includes over 100 rounds of ammunition, Small Machine Gun, light machine gun mounted on a tripod and fixed at the rear of our vehicle, wireless sets, all in all we were over a dozen. We soon crossed the Sultani Bridge and in this half an hour of drive we came across few civilian vehicles also in which invariably there was a female clad in full veil sitting in rear was present, few men working on construction along the road or track. After crossing the bridge we soon came across a horde of children which were going back home, I instantly looked at my watch it was half past eleven, other day while driving with Qaiser it was the same time when the children had the break, probably the school timings are only up till 1130. Boys of all age ranging from innocent looking toddlers to teenagers all wearing black militia kameez shalwar and black peak cap with a red badge, I am not sure whether this is provided by the state or they have to buy it at their own. The school bags also vary majority were carrying their books in shopping bag or in hands but few had the proper bag as well. The strength must be over two hundred, I instructed the driver to be extra careful because now and then the boys would cross the road . In my opinion these boys have to cover over 2-3 miles daily on foot one way for schooling. They all stared at our convoy, the very young ones invariably salutes and other merely stares with smile or wave hands. For next half an hour till we reached Sadda the flow of school children remained constant. This is the generation on which we needs investment, the state has provided the schools and is in the process of constructing even more but still there are few administrative issues that needs to be resolve like the transportation and provision of free meals to the boys apart from books. These boys in majority of the cases had very little to eat in the breakfast and have no money to buy anything from the shop which in any case are very rare. Their parents needsapplause for sending them to school for their better future. In my opinion the retired personnals of education directorate from Frontier Corps are very ideal to be employed as school teachers and certainly the FC can play an important role in this long strategic uplifting of the area. I did not observed any NGO working in the area on this issue. The area is very similar to Gilgit and Skardu but where as in these areas the Agha Khan Foundation is working quite diligently on many projects no such venture or personality is visible here. There were quite a number of small girls also coming back from school near Sadda, their uniform consist of blue kameez and white shalwar with white scarf, they move in groups among themselves and no boy was allowed to walk with them. There is a boys hostel at Sadda but what little I could peep through the open gate it looked pathetic in condition. All along the Levies and Khassadars have their posts and one striking feature about their small posts are the flowers that they have planted which gives very tidy and artistic looks.

Sadda as usual was bustling with life, same aroma of kebabs. From Sadda till Thall which we reached at 1300 hours, my eyes and mind were looking at the students, the colour of uniform changed into khaki and I noticed few young students wearing even trousers and shirt too probably coming from private school which are also here , housed in simple building with signs of teaching English. There are few



English teaching centres also although the very spelling of what they intend teaching are incorrect. Transportation of children is the greyest area in almost every part of my country. Time and again I wish for the old government transport service which was in use in last decade and half to be operative again, it can serve the purpose by providing free transport service to students only, no political party has even thought about it, they all are more concerned about greater philosophical issues. At Sadda the scouts arranged a private taxi for me to take me to Bannu, there are two more scouts going with me on leave one uptill Kohat and other right till Bannu. After saying good bye and shaking hands with all I bid them and our journey started in a Toyota taxi driven by a mid sixties driver.

For almost quarter of century in my mind and memory the beauty of that journey in 1986 which I undertook towards Parachinar was symbolised by the old trees on both sides of the road with shade covering almost every corner of the road, I searched for that picture and soon realised that all those trees have been cut down to expand the road and instead popular has been planted which gives partial shade. I remained quite as other three were talking in Pashto which I can understand partially, there was Pashto music as well which are normally a copy of Indian songs and highly irritating in nature. The driver as usual was fast and casual thus I was under stress to keep an eye on events. We made a halt at a CNG pump and one of the scouts went to fetch a Dew Mountain Cold Drink, I had enough of this yellowish stingy drink and as such politely declined the offer. Now I had conversation with driver and asked him about those trees and he nodded in agreement that there were trees and that have been cut down. However there are still few patches of that beauty still surviving which I noted. About the train and track I felt sad as it was a good mode of transport. Road presently is under repair and construction{ it was same in 1986 too}, driver asked me about the present situation which I simply stated is good and it is just a passage of time. Driver now narrated his tenure in Iraq couple of years back, how he went there in search of work, how he was badly treated by the Salman an Arab who was more concerned about his vehicles than their safety {drivers} and so on, this driver had good words about the Americans because in the end it was they who actually rescued him from the clutches of that Salman. At this point he tried to overtake a van which was already overtaking another van and resultantly we barely survived a crash, it was a close shave, now the two scouts in the taxi were adamant to have a fight with the van driver but I simply told them to forget the incident and move on. I was now even more cautious about the safety of myself in such a rash driving environments. We reached Bannu at 1600 hours and all along the driver kept on cribbing about the way other drivers were violating the rules and constantly breaking them himself, at times overtaking on a climb, in a curve, on a bridge. It was a hot day; we refuelled twice enroute and safely reached the Serai at 1600 hours where I had a sigh of relief.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2012

Woke up early in the morning the digging is going outside for the boring of water well, read my journal of America and thought of Reena she had done maximum for me there and she is right in labelling me as 'beqadra'. There are chances of a helicopter movement thus I better get ready, my small bag has got a broken arm, my head is still suffering from heat. I had a long conversation with Lt Col Jawwad, he is the only friend that I have and it is quite refreshing to have conversation with him, he is trying to adjust in his new task as commanding officer and as such his under command are having tough times.

1630 hours, Miranshah. Wonders of modern world that I am sitting in my room No 4 in Tochi Mess having a cup of tea. Commandant Colonel Wajahat gave me a call and we had a chat, he had brought the pigeons from Lahore and intend experimenting with sending the messages as in old days, he had four

such pigeons and he informed me that experiment has failed miserably, he had taken all the four to a nearby post and set them free hoping that they will fly back to his residence but three of them after a short flight sat on a nearby house and fourth one is untraceable. Wajahat also offered me that in case if I want he can arrange transport to bring me back to Miranshah, I declined the offer as it is highly risky and only last Wednesday an IED had been blasted on a vehicle killing four army soldiers, in retaliation drone attack was conducted on Friday in which two miscreants were killed. There was news that a helicopter might fly to Miranshah from Peshawar and I was informed by the attendant of this. He later confirmed it at 1355 hours and aptly I was ready and reached the helipad which is next to the old Bannu Fort. A Puma came but there were quite a number of soldiers in waiting thus I remained idle having no hope of getting a seat but one of soldiers signalled me to come forward and then it was the pilot's discretion to allow. Major Babar was the captain rather co-pilot and he instantly recognised me although I failed to do so and I was in the Puma, he was very courteous indeed.

Flight was uneventful but I scanned the area trying to make out of geography. The Tochi River joins and flows rather south west of Bannu with Kurram flowing on the north. The Tochi is forced to adopt this path because of low mountain ridges that forms its southern boundary. The area is green and after few minutes of flying the air field of Bannu becomes visible and then the town of Mirali. We were flying over the eastern end of the Tochi valley, it is rather plain but what a contrast to the Kurram valley which is fertile and green, here only the adjoining areas of the Tochi are fertile rest is barren, valley itself is narrow, the river is also not very wide and twisting becoming narrower and narrower as one looks at the western end {Afghanistan}. Soon we were over the Miranshah and landed safely, my last concern was the rather fast approach of the Puma for landing but then it was put under control, the heli landed very close to the mud hangar which is not a very good sign, many accidents have taken place mainly due to this last second casual attitude but then pilot in command is the best judge.

Australia and Pakistan match is going on, Pakistan has scored 149 and victory seems a distant reality. My regret is that I have not been able to call my parents or Reena but I did have conversation with Jawad and Tiger. Sitting here is like sitting in home but now I must complete the book.

### 9<sup>th</sup> October 2012

I am sitting in the Officers Mess Library at Miranshah surrounded by a galaxy of writers, ideas, philosophies, travelogue and above all history. I will not be off the mark if I say that I am having a company of killers because in these over four hundred books at least there are description of over thirty million human killings, how to do it, why to do it, how it was executed, why it was executed, how to do it in future, why not to leave a single individual alive. There are accounts of heroics, I like 'Sky My Kingdom' by the German female pilot the one who flew the Hitler; Hanna Reitsch translated by Lawrence Wilson, a 1955 edition. She talks of her childhood how her father used to love music. Another book which I scanned last night was about Dr Goebbels, he suffered from a disease in the childhood, was physically weak, a propagandist of highest order 'one who rules the streets rule the country'. Then there are speeches of Winston Churchill in two volumes. In recent times I have developed a dislike for him yet his command of English language is extraordinary. I just glanced through them and surprisingly I found that these are not mere speeches rather a history of war itself. Forward from Victory are the speeches of Field Marshal Montgomery the most over rated general of all time, I have read his one book which he wrote after his retirement and is about travelling in China and other parts of world his observations were

valid, however at present his speech on morale is fantastic because I have gone through it when I came here in May, how fear paralyse you, how shabby appearance is detrimental to good morale.

Pakistan lost the semi-final to Sri Lanka, India was out early thus the pain was gone, I made a call to Lieutenant Colonel Qaiser as per promise. In the final Sri Lanka lost to West Indies but the day Pakistan lost the match it was very tense and as soon the results became obvious I started working on the book and till to date have finished till 2005. Nothing extraordinary about the chain of events in that period. There was friendship with Americans, combined raids were conducted in the valley to apprehend the Talibans but without any success. The valley agitated not because of this but due to load shedding and electric bills in 2002-2003. There was a tribal war between the Madda Khel and Khaddar Khel Wazirs which paved the way for the scouts to occupy the inaccessible areas at Dwa Toi, Kazha Valley and Bangidar area at the beginning of 2002. In 2002 and 2003 there was an increase in activity across the border and very close to it by the Americans but somehow the other they were confined to the territory of Afghanistan, there were instances of border violation but these should not be taken seriously because in certain cases they flew for seconds inside the own area and in other cases they flew less than a kilometre in terms of distance. It was only at Alwara Mandi that a serious violation took place in which they landed inside the own territory for minutes and searched a house, in majority of the cases the fire work also remained confined to Afghanistan at times however one odd mortar shell did land in our area. Now if one compares the situation between the Turkey and Syria where a single mortar shell landing inside Turkey has provoked the parliament to an extent that war has been authorised on Syria then one has to give credit to Pakistan, America and Afghanistan for maintain a peace among themselves. Pakistani troops did not like the Northern Alliance troops who are not Pashtuns and majority of trouble erupted from this lack of confidence. In my opinion Pakistan managed to walk a tight rope in a very balance way and Americans also played a key role in it. Both these countries conducted joint search operations as well in which American troops wore the Scouts uniform also, they were housed in a barrack not more than hundred meters away from Jalal Ud Din Haqqani's home where his family was living, strange world. When I look back from here the I can recall the days when these both countries were very close buddies, own Army Aviation pilots went to America for training, Americans were teaching them at Dhamial where a special school was also opened up for this. Every day there were American military flights taking off from Chaklala, I have pictures of post 2005 earthquake when Americans came to our rescue at the end a grand dinner was given in their honour at Qasim Base, smiling pictures of officers and troops. In 2008 there was a ceremony held at Qasim Base in which American ambassador was also present and I struck a conversation with the public relations officer of American Embassy because I was keen to have photographs of the ceremony for the Aviation History book and we both agreed to meet each other at Serena next evening. She was quite bulky but pretty, I gave her the book Great Game as gift and she handed me over the pictures; those were the times. Officers were against them then also but they were the one whom we call fundamentalist, who were taking the side of Talibans rather than the state in the conflict and exactly this is what is being highlighted in the books I have referred above. If the state has waged a war than one must fight till the end irrespective of its morality.

I have met another very fine officer from Army Aviation Major Jawad of 25 Aviation Squadron, he likes fountain pens, leather shoes, books, collects junks and have a positive attitude towards life thus we both are friends, above all he is a good listener and nothing pleases a retired officer more than this. Colonel Ghumman also from aviation is here but he talks more, I like him because it was in 1992 that he walked into my room at Gujranwala with Captain Jeidi my platoon mate and since then has been very

courteous and now is a professional senior officer. He has been flying throughout the last ten years in the tribal area with occasional breaks, he has plenty of stories, he is the only one who is trigger happy in Cobra which is a good sign, no pain of conscious on killing the innocent, no regret on firing rockets on assembly of people, this is what war is all about. Above all he has juicy and spicy tales of his adventures in the Peace Keeping force at Sudan and Italy.

Had a splendid brunch at Colonel Wajahat the Commandant at his residence on this Sunday, a royal menu, dishes for which I was yearning, nihari, brain masala, batair, paneer palak/saag, but the dish which was sensational was 'date halwa'. I am now part of Tochi Scouts, I go much before the guest arrival time and leaves when all other have left, it is now a friendship with Wajahat, I like him, he has a sense of humour, uses foul language the way an army officer should use and spends the money the way a commandant should do, above all he does not pend anything for later. I wish him success in career but I doubt it because he is very open mouth about the policies; let's see what happens. Another officer who has caught my eyes is Captain Bilal a very good officer indeed.

### 11<sup>th</sup> October 2012

It is 2100 hours and awiting for the dinner, I am taking dinner in the mess, there is no lunch and at times there is no breakfast rather a cup of tae, not that there is any shortage of food here but the timmings are such that there seems to be no time for such frivolity. Today I had a track suit from Tochi scouts and it seems that only thing missing is the uniform now otherwise I am a tochte . Routine is haphazard , late awakenings despite my best effort to be early, every night I go to bed with solemn thought and pledge to be up early but every ady there is a regret. Than time in the clerks office, meeting and raeding old files then a cup of tae with young officers at adjutant Lieutenant Amin of 38 Cavalry's office then some work in the library, off to tennis where I am still practising with marker, neither I have been invited to play at the clay court and nor I have any desire but I spend most of time sitting outside having cup of tea and little weight lifting. Tennis is addiction to watch here, standard of agme not very high but the reamrks and the spirit in which it is palyed is the actch. Commandant Colonel Wajahat and Major Zameer are always on one side with colonel Riaz the colonel staff and either Lieutenant Colonel Omar or Amir on other end, Brigadier Shahid is on leave and expected to be back after two days. The discussion after tennis is interesting and a window into the minds of present day senior level commanders and staff officers. The issue now a days is the Malala Yousafzai, two days ago while having a cup of tae at the tennis the grade one intelligence officer inquired me that do I know Malala, I said no and then he narrated the firing on her, later I watched television and came to know about her. Three days back the discussion was about Imran Khan's peace march to Waziristan and these two are interlinked to each other in a cob web manner and before these two incidents it was cricket world cup but it is history now.

Imran Khan's peace march is clouded in mystery as none of the participants and all those who have been following his politics have ever been in North Waziristan or have any analytical approach towards the whole issue, his one of the party president Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi an Oxford graduate has been the foreign minister of Pakistan thus he must be well conversant with the international politics. There are two types of politics, one which revolves around real world and other around ideals and both cannot intercept each other. The army officers I sense have a soft corner for Imran for reasons that they all are fed up of other two parties for no reason at all; thus they were quite enthusiastic about his march. Indirectly it amounts to taking a side of Taliban and this is very strange because they are fighting against these very Talibans and yet supporting the very person who is having a soft corner for Talibans.

Now after Malala incident the dynamics have changed because this incident has sparked a worldwide condemnation and Imran Khan is not among those who have outrightly condemned it he has disguised his words but the general mood is now to go after the Talibans and an operation in North Waziristan may be on card because now the public sympathy is with the state. This was the discussion that took place and Drones are all time favourites for condemnation, but why? Colonel Ghumman had the logic of international law and morality although only yesterday he confessed of firing over the civilian people because to him it is difficult to differentiate between friend and foe, Colonel Riaz is in favour of them but he cannot express it explicitly. The other officers simply listen and pass one odd comment. In last three days there has been two drone attacks, my own observation is that these drone attacks take place within forty eight hours of any strike done by Taliban and are a source of morale boosting for every person.

Last night there was an extravagant dine out of 103 Brigade Commander along with 20 and 36 Baloch Regiments. I was invited and before that I had a good conversation with Major General Ali Abbas nothing official just talking about the time when we used to buy the garlands of flowers for our wives from the road side vendors. Dinner had everything and in abundance which in my own opinion is wastage of food. Fish, mutton, chicken, kebabs, rice, qeema, vegetable and on top of it two kinds of sweet dishes along with a variety of salads and chutneys. I was made to sit on head table whereas the commandant Tochi had to sit on a round table which I think is not on, and I have a strong feeling that he made this sitting reshuffle, he is too courteous in this aspect. I did not utter a word other than passing remarks about the good quality of food. Brigadier Raza was sitting next to me and he in military language locked horns with general over strategy, had I been in service I would have kicked him under the table but not now. The topics generally range on every subject including politics but not women. Over all it was ok, later Ali spoke well to raise the morale of the young officers, he can speak very well although he still tries to be humble in this aspect.

On historical aspect I have come across one more fantastic person Clerk Sabz Ali, he caught me yesterday in the clerk's office. The worst scenario is when you are confronted by a person who is educated but under paid, his complaints are socialistic in nature, his views idealistic and his vision is impracticable in which all the wealth of the world is equally distributed among all people. The standard perception of our country going down the drain the corruption and safarish and on top of it the complaints against the character of president Zardari were there. I tackled it one by one giving him the example from the life going around him and me, I highlighted that the average pay of a scout sepoy now a days is more than what a lecturer is getting in the civil despite the fact that the scout sepoy is only under graduate and can hardly at times write his own name. I also highlighted the fact that even here in Tochi the people tend to look after their own tribes more than others, can we call it corruption or riwaj, then the fact that in our culture we are bound to accommodate our relatives or clan despite our difficulties but then this is what culture is all about. I am happy that he genuinely got convinced and we became good friends, his quality is that he has been maintaining a diary in which every terrorist incident that has taken place in last ten years is recorded, he has data in his mobile whenever any drone has struck since 2007. I have found him a genuine lover of history, he has promised to get the diary from his home by this week which will ease my work.

**Today I interviewed Subedar Sharbat regarding his account of Aarsal Khan the gangster. Aarsal Khan ‘ Gabbar Singh of Tajaauri’**

Aarsal Khan was a notorious gangster who might have lived the life of his choosing which was mainly kidnapping had he not committed the cardinal sin of kidnapping two girls Fouzia and Sobia daughters of Sharifullah on 12<sup>th</sup> march 2004 they were going to attend a marriage with their father. Kidnapping of females in the North Waziristan is not regarded as a manly act and that brought the wrath of state against him. Readers might have remembered that almost a decade ago the Nowsher Fort was built in the area of Karkanwam to check the notorious and nefarious acts of anti - society elements and this time again the Tochi Scouts were in hunt for Aarsal Khan. His abode was across and over the mountain that stood in front of Nowsher Fort. Commandant Tochi Scouts Colonel Ashiq Hussain himself led the expedition along with a wing of Swat scouts and one company of Khyber Rifles. Village Karkanwam comprising over 200 houses is a notorious area located at the junction of four agencies i.e FR Bannu on the East, FR Lakki on South East, South Waziristan Agency on South West and North Waziristan Agency on North West. Due to its geographical layout, it has always been a safe heaven for proclaimed offenders who harbour the dacoits, car lifters, kidnappers and other notorious people from down districts. No agency has ever been able to exercise control on this area. This operation against Aarsal Khan was planned and conducted from 31 March 2003.

Aarsal Khan belonged to the Shah Jani Khel tribe a sub section of Bhattani, his life is a strange paradox of good and evil, he was the uncrowned king of his area . Political agents had to pay him for every development in the area for instance he was paid 1.5 Million Rupees for the construction of road from Tajaauri – Gabar Shadi Khel, he was also paid 1.2 million for the construction of civil dispensary at Gazbaba and another .6 million for the construction of women teachers hostel at Chigalair. Hi son Wasi Khan was employed at a monthly pay of Rupees 3100/ as chowkidar at the dispensary; but all this changed after the kidnapping of the girls.

After preliminary reconnaissance the very first arrest was made on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2004 at Tajbi Khel then on 16<sup>th</sup> April the arrests were made at Azad Khel, Ayub Khel, Aram Tala and Paa Khel. This search and arrests continued till 11<sup>th</sup> May 2004 when last arrest was made in Shadi Khel. A total of 144 persons were arrested and 40 houses were demolished. One scout of Swat Scouts was killed and three other were wounded in this operation. Two 12.7mm guns, one light machine gun, three sub machine guns, thirteen rockets of RPG-7, 77 bombs of three inch mortar were recovered from Aarsal Khan’s arsenal not to mention over five thousand rounds of varying calibres.

Subedar Sharbat Khattak was then a naik he narrates ‘ *I was part of the commandant’s escort then and we carried the reconnaissance, it required almost three hours of hard journey from Nowshehr Fort to Chigalair where it was reported that Aarsal Kahn is hiding. Major Bajwa, Lieutenant Colonel Zafar ullah Khan, Major Hanif our military transport officer were also with us, Subedar Yar Muhammad of Tochi Field Battery who later embraced sahadat in in a road blast was commanding the guns. We reached the Chigalair by afternoon, it was reported that Aarsal Khan is residing in the government dispensary. The dispensary was empty but when we were about to return we were fired from the nearby houses and from adjoining high grounds, we brought artillery fire and before darkness we retreated to our camp. Next day we went again and arrested few people and then on tips of local we raided few other places like Azad Khel, Ayub*



*Khel, Aram Khel and Paa Khel on 16th April, we were able to arrest the family of Aarsal Khan including his daughters Chamroza, Eman Bibi and wife Khair Bibi apart from his sons Wasil Khan and Kameshair. I remember that Aarsal Khan's mother was also part of this arrest apart from his two bhabis in which one was old and other relatively young which tried to outrun the scouts but was captured. Aarsal's mother pleaded that this is disgrace to the family's pride on which our answer was that the girls whom Aarsal had abducted also are some body's honour, meanwhile we got the news that one of the girl Fouzia has been killed and her burnt body has been left in open. On 19th April we got hold of Angoor Khan at Tajbi Khel, it was reported that this Angoor Khan is supplying food and water to the Aarsal Khan but Angoor flatly refuted this and took swear on the holy Koran and also said that if he lies than his Hajj may go waste, on this he was left. Later that night one of the abductee managed to escape from Aarsal Khan and he narrated that not only he but the other girl is also alive and they all were kept in a cave, 'I saw your feet while you were searching and could hear your words also but Aarsal Khan was pointing a gun to our head and threatened that if any one made any noise he will blast his brains off'. This person also confirmed that on same very day Angoor Khan had come and delivered the food. On this we again arrested Angoor Khan, his wife and six years old son, they all were kept in separate rooms, we started interrogation but none of them was willing to open his mouth, thus we played a tactics and threatened the wife that if she wants to see his son and husband alive then she must speak out and also fired a shot in air, the women became hysterical and pleaded that the life of her son be spared and Angoor Khan may be killed, she admitted that Angoor Khan is party to all the crimes of Aarsal Khan. In another raid we captured two brothers' one named Sikander and other .... We used same tactics on them, Sikander was very tough, he was given the beating of his life for the reason that one scout Lance Naik Zahid of Swat Scouts had succumbed to a rifle shot and other Nowshehr was taken prisoner along with the weapons by Aarsal Khan, Sikander remained defiant however his younger brother admitted that he has been acting as the driver of the Aarsal Khan and on his tips further arrests were made'.*

Aarsal Khan despite all the efforts of scouts remained fugitive, a combined Jirga of Marwat and Bhattani tribes was assembled on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2004 which imposed a fine of 1.5 Million Rupees on any one found guilty of providing harbour to Aarsal Khan or his friends. Aarsal Khan finally met his fate in 2010 when he was poisoned by his friend who had invited him on a dinner. The other brother of Sikander was later enrolled in Tochi Scouts and is now a proficient and disciplined driver.

### **11<sup>th</sup> October 2012**

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been invited to play at the clay court and nor I have any desire but I spend most of time sitting outside having cup of tea and little weight lifting. Tennis is addiction to watch here, standard of game not very high but the remarks and the spirit in which it is played is the catch. Commandant Colonel Wajahat and Major Zameer are always on one side with colonel Riaz the colonel staff and either Lieutenant Colonel Omar or Amir on other end, Brigadier Shahid is on leave and expected to be back after two days. The discussion after tennis is interesting and a window into the minds of present day senior level commanders and staff officers. The issue nowadays is the Malala Yousafzai, two days ago while having a cup of tea at the tennis the grade one intelligence officer inquired me that do I know Malala, I said no and then he narrated the firing on her, later I watched television and came to know about her. Three days back the discussion was about Imran Khan's peace march to Waziristan and these two are interlinked to each other in a cob web manner and before these two incidents it was cricket world cup but it is history now.

Imran Khan's peace march is clouded in mystery as none of the participants and all those who have been following his politics have ever been in North Waziristan or have any analytical approach towards the whole issue, his one of the party president Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi an Oxford graduate has been the foreign minister of Pakistan thus he must be well conversant with the international politics. There are two types of politics, one which revolves around real world and other around ideals and both cannot intercept each other. The army officers I sense have a soft corner for Imran for reasons that they all are fed up of other two parties for no reason at all; thus they were quite enthusiastic about his march. Indirectly it amounts to taking a side of Taliban and this is very strange because they are fighting against these very Taliban and yet supporting the very person who is having a soft corner for Taliban. Now after Malala incident the dynamics have changed because this incident has sparked a worldwide condemnation and Imran Khan is not among those who have outrightly condemned it he has disguised his words but the general mood is now to go after the Taliban and an operation in North Waziristan may be on card because now the public sympathy is with the state. This was the discussion that took place and Drones are all time favourites for condemnation, but why? Colonel Ghuman had the logic of international law and morality although only yesterday he confessed of firing over the civilian people because to him it is difficult to differentiate between friend and foe, Colonel Riaz is in favour of them but he cannot express it explicitly. The other officers simply listen and pass one odd comment. In last three days there has been two drone attacks, my own observation is that these drone attacks take place within forty eight hours of any strike done by Taliban and are a source of morale boosting for every person.

Last night there was an extravagant dine out of 103 Brigade Commander along with 20 and 36 Baloch Regiments. I was invited and before that I had a good conversation with Major General Ali Abbas nothing official just talking about the time when we used to buy the garlands of flowers for our wives from the road side vendors. Dinner had everything and in abundance which in my own opinion is wastage of food. Fish, mutton, chicken, kebabs, rice, qeema, vegetable and on top of it two kinds of sweet dishes along with a variety of salads and chutneys. I was made to sit on head table whereas the commandant Tochi had to sit on a round table which I think is not on, and I have a strong feeling that he made this sitting reshuffle, he is too courteous in this aspect. I did not utter a word other than passing remarks about the good quality of food. Brigadier Raza was sitting next to me and he in military language locked horns with general over strategy, had I been in service I would have kicked him under the table but not now. The topics generally range on every subject including politics but not women. Over all it was ok, later Ali spoke well to raise the morale of the young officers, he can speak very well although he still tries to be humble in this aspect.



On historical aspect I have come across one more fantastic person Clerk Sabz Ali, he caught me yesterday in the clerk's office. The worst scenario is when you are confronted by a person who is educated but under paid, his complains are socialistic in nature, his views idealistic and his vision is impracticable in which all the wealth of the world is equally distributed among all people . The standard perception of own country going down the drain the corruption and safarish and on top of it the complaints against the character of president Zardari were there. I tackled it one by one giving him the example from the life going around him and me, I highlighted that the average pay of a scout sepoy now a days is more than what a lecturer is getting in the civil despite the fact that the scout sepoy is only under graduate and can hardly at times write his own name. I also highlighted the fact that even here in Tochi the people tend to look after their own tribes more than others, can we call it corruption or riwaj, then the fact that in our culture we are bound to accommodate our relatives or clan despite our difficulties but then this is what culture is all about. I am happy that he genuinely got convinced and we became good friends, his quality is that he has been marinating a diary in which every terrorist incident that has taken place in last ten years is recorded, he has data in his mobile whenever any drone has struck since 2007. I have found him a genuine lover of history, he has promised to get the diary from his home by this week which will ease my work.

### 19<sup>th</sup> October 2012

It is noon, outside it is drizzling, the day had started with a fire, initially I heard two rounds of fire which I thought that some officer had purchased a weapon and is testing it then there was along burst, few rounds fired on single shot and then another long burst of machine gun, it continued for some time. Now with passage of time the patience has increased and one does not tend to react as panicky as in early days . I all of a sudden then got up, I thought that the Talibans have attacked the prison which is next to the mess building and about which Colonel Wajahat has been mentioning for last few days. Outside the sweeper was sweeping I inquired him and he just gave a blank look, the waiter was walking towards me with a tray and tea, then I saw captains Saad, Bilal and Waqas in full military gear walking towards the vehicle , firing was still going on. I had a meeting with Brigadier Aqeel commander of 103 Brigade, the one who took part in the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2012 incident, he and his brigade is leaving for Lahore on this Sunday and I wanted to have his opinion about that incident. In my opinion one cannot do justice to the history without getting view point of all concern. I had to take the bath but now I was concern that in case I am taking shower and the miscreants walk in, it will be embarrassing. *{The breakfast is here, consisting ofa paarth and two kebabs and cup of tae, waiter has asked me, whether I should pour the tea, so lets have the breakfast first}* .

Good breakfast, very efficient mess, otherday I pointed to the mess havildar that kitchen needs cleaning and today it was clean, especially the door had inches of dirt and grease, it is dilemma all over the army. Coming back to Brigadier Aqeel he is from 28 Baluch { Jeidi's unit} very polite and courteous, he came to my room but I took him to the library, it speaks of his courtesy. I wanted to ask him about the 6<sup>th</sup> May incident but always was concerned that he may mind it, but today I listened from horse's mouth.

In his words, there are certain walls of medium height which are all over the area and especially in the south of AminPiquet which cause irritant in terms of miscreants fire so he decided to demolish one of the wall and simultaneously near Isha almost ten miles east of the wall to plant mines to hinder the

rocket firers on the fort. Thus on 6<sup>th</sup> May which was Sunday he alongwith the commanding officer of 36 Baluch went first to the demolishing site where the dozer was brought on a mover under protection, Sunday was a curfew in the area. Amin Piquet is by the way part of No.5 Wing at Boya at wing commander lieutenant colonel Muhammad Ali was also supposed to be there and he did arrive there later. The process of wall demolishing went as per the plan, they had also plan to search a house which was close by. By noon they went back to the old site where mines were being planted, they met the Engineer's party who had already completed the task thus they move back and stopped en-route at the stadium gate for a break that is when they learnt that Captain Suleman of 36 Baluch is hit during the search, thus they rushed to the spot; which was an orchard near the compound.

The compound was encircled by the company of 36 Baluch, company commander and 2IC of the regiment were there, the cordon party was approaching from the southern side and was making no progress and that was not visible to the brigade commander and commanding officer from their spot. The party fired few rockets also but it made little impact on the mud brick walls of the compound. Brigadier Aqeel also moved two tanks from the Amin Piquet which had gone there on the same day, it took half an hour for the pair of tanks to reach the spot and they also fired from the southern side but the rounds also made little impact on the mud wall but one round did hit the pillar and wall was partially breached. The first two rounds of tank went astray even at close range of two hundred yards, {25 Cavalry}. The tanks were scared of rocket launchers which were sporadically being fired.

Now another soldier of 36 Baluch was hit and was evacuated and then another but it was difficult to evacuate him from so close from the compound but it was done. Time now was mid-day and the intense fire was coming from all direction. At this time they called for the reinforcement and one more QRF came but it was hit by a rocket launcher, *all I saw was a fire ball at the southern side and then came to know that a truck has been hit by the rocket*, another QRF was called, later they breached the compound and captured three teen aged Uzbeks and one elder person was killed while making escape, another miscreant died with an explosion inside the compound but own casualties were also mounting. The time now was evening and curfew was lifted as per routine and with this it was heard that thousands of people were marching towards the concerned area {actually around hundred}. Commander and commanding officer now both left the area and moved to the Amin Piquet and enroute they saw stranded vehicles, one was hit on the tyres and other had an injured driver. The tanks were also moved back. The performance of tank crew was below par, they had no communication and furthermore had closed down the cupola and Brigadier Aqeel had to knock it open by throwing stones on it, the crew was hesitant in crossing the ditch or alga in front, they had fired all of their ammunition without causing any damage. Cobras were called but they remained at very high level and only one rocket hit the compound. They in the meanwhile had vanished from the scene because the support helicopter Bell 412 had gone to pick another casualty Brigadier Gull at some other sector, he had suffered heart stroke. Now the situation was that the both the brigade commander and commanding officer had gone back to the Amin Piquet and from there the young officers volunteer including Captain Changezi {he mentioned few more but I have forgotten the names} came down in APC to carry out the rescue. Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Ali was also not present at the post. That was the situation at night which they all spent in anticipation of an attack on the post.

Initially there were reports of fifteen missing which later came down to seven. Next day they all moved back, the curfew was imposed but later it was lifted to allow the locals to pick their dead ones.

This was the situation when I landed at the Miranshah.

I asked Brigadier Aqeel few more questions regarding the overall infantry tactics, and he said they have to be changed in the context of this conflict, few pairs, less crowding, maximum fire power and minimum use of soft vehicles. He highlighted that maximum casualties he had suffered occurred due to the use of the vehicles. He admitted that the Taliban are highly motivated and excellent marksman. I had heard the term of intense fire coming but always thought that there are some traces of fire coming but on that day I experienced it without having any clue that from where it is coming from. The standards of individual soldier training needs to be improved. Above all aviation needs to be streamlined, here I am sitting three miles away from the site of conflict and helicopters had to be requested through division, corps and then to aviation channel and finally to the pilots, it is cumbersome. I fully agree with him on the aviation aspect because right now I am going through the chain of events that took place in the valley from 5<sup>th</sup> July onwards when Tochi Scouts were made under the operational control of army {7 Division} and this point about the aviation is repeated consistently.

### 23 October 2012

It is 2000 hours, sitting in the library and no reason to be depressed when in last three days over twenty people have died outside the fort including women and children and one inside the complex. I am not sure but firing can start any time because this is what the pattern is there since I had that cup of tea with Brigadier Aqeel. Should I go backwards from here or forward from that cup of tea, let me think. I better have a shower because in the morning the water was cold. It is difficult to explain how and why it all started, the two early shots which I heard on that day were in fact the sound of fire fired by a miscreant {Uzbek} and second later he exploded himself thus it was a suicide attempt. He had been walking behind a truck in front of the stadium post and as soon as the truck passed by he just walked towards the check post and before the incharge could say anything he fired two shots and killed him, but meanwhile another scout on the far side of the road fired a burst and killed him and then a mayhem was set in motion which lasted for over two hours, there was another person with this Uzbek and he was injured and all the efforts were to catch him. Colonel Wajahat the commandant rushed to the spot and so were the three officers I mentioned. Wajahat gave a cash prize of Rupees 50,000 to the two soldiers who saved the honour of Tochi Scouts.

Later in the evening when I went to the Tennis Courts he was sitting in office which was bit unusual, but I had a game with Brigadier Shahid and Colonel Akhtar. During the end of set one we heard the Cobras firing and we discontinued the game and walked and later climbed to the Iftikhar Post from where we had a good view of the city, curfew was imposed and soon tanks, recoilless rifles, machine guns and Cobras started firing on the Machis Post Area, for half an hour it lasted and then artillery started pounding the positions. I had never seen such a display of firepower, Cobras were impressive and lethal, air was filled with the rattling sound of multiple weapons, dust, smoke and clouds raising from where they were firing and where they were landing the rounds. I was mesmerised, it was getting dark, the mosques from city and within the fort were calling the Muslims for prayers, it was emotional to feel that on one hand the mosque is calling us to come onto the path of righteous and on other hand there was no break in the shelling. City was deserted only few dogs were roaming around without any concern of what all is going around. The sound of RR is terrible shrieking, tank fire is loud, artillery whistling and Cobra is sexy, when it fires the sky is rattled, one hears the sound after a pause, I could see the tank firing and then after some time the bang of its shell landing at the target area which was not visible. I am a weak

man and as such with every fire my whole body trembles, my brain and all nerves strained. But one has to hide all this. One feels powerful in such environment when one is sure that no retaliation can come. In asad mood I descended and walk back to mess, enroute I stopped at quarter guard to offer my sympathies to the troops for the loss of the jawan in the day, it was as if I had lost one of my friend whom I have not even met but such is the bond. At quarter guard I came to know that he was married and was living with family, it was even more disheartening, to picture how his wife and children whom he must have left probably in a good mood today promising to take them home on eid and all of a sudden he is no more there.

Later I had a shower and then thought of going to the Commandant's house for condolence, I am very weak and poor in this matter, I was feeling the genuine sadness creeping in me and wanted to sit with someone to take my burden off, I wanted to shed few tears but there was none and no place to do so. After some time I went to his place luckily he was not there thus I left a message and acme back to mess, had dinner and went back to my room. All night the artillery pounded, I thought of the people on the receiving end, the one who are living under the flight path of shells, one wrong calculation on part of observer and shell can land anywhere. I thought of my daughter but then I also thought of the crimes these people have committed against us, the many soldiers and scouts not to mention innocent people who have died because of them. Wars are all over the world are bad. Laying on my bed the thought that these people cannot retaliate the way we do with our artillery was comforting.

Next morning there was a brunch given by the 114 Brigade, I was not sure whether it will be held or not but it was there and I hurriedly got ready and joined it, it was there that Wajahat narrated me the whole episode, on breakfast table it seemed as if nothing had ever happened here.

On Sunday which was 21<sup>st</sup> October 2012, Brigadier Aqeel came to say last words of goodbye and I am moved by his gesture for the reason that seldom I have experienced such gestures from others. This is either a shortcoming of retiring as a major or a positive sign that at least I have never gone through such rituals. I do recall Major Aziz Niazi in 4 Squadron at Quetta who once myself and my wife were being posted out to the Gujranwala , on permanent course gave us a dinner at Musketers restaurant, commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Ansari had pend it till I complete the course and then I should come back here with family to be dined out. Another time my friend Lt Col Masood arranged a good dined out at 27 Squadron but at last minute my wife picked a row with me or vice versa and I had to attend it alone. Skardu was another embarrassment, Lt Col Ubaid had put me under a military trial for possession of weapons the reason was something else but that was the excuse and later when Mueen took over he simply took over the house in which I had left my luggage and I was in Rawalpindi, another embarrassment, similar was the condition at Aitcheson College. Thus I never had a proper end at any station, probably Gujranwala was one station but no it was not, I was undergoing the court of inquiry, at Peshawar I had been awarded severe reprimand before posting out in 1993; what else is left. Thus the kind of courtesy which I am watching, observing, undergoing here at Miranshah and especially in the hands of Tochi Scouts is extraordinary in everyway.

### **Eid Day 27<sup>th</sup> October 2012**

It is eid day and it is sunny and warm, Local had the eid yesterday which is another strange paradox of our cultural clash. In my opinion the local logically displays a greater use of common sense than the state organs in determining the days of eid. All our Muslim festivals are interlinked with the

sighting of new moon and above all it is in direct relation with the what is happening in Saudi Arabia, now that country is in terms of Greenwich time standards only three and half hours behind us, in terms of distance only 1000 miles away on our west, in terms of flying time it takes three hours to reach there. Today is 27<sup>th</sup> of October here in Pakistan and time is 1100 hours local or 0600 hours GMT, in Saudi Arabia it is the same date but time there is 0800 hours local, thus how can we have a festival a day later. Above all how on earth we can say that the moon which was sighted at Saudi Arabia last night was not sighted here. The local of tribal agency still maintain one day gap but the state of Pakistan maintains two days gap. Thus eid was in Saudi Arabia on 25<sup>th</sup>, locals had it on 26<sup>th</sup> and state is having it on 27<sup>th</sup>, strange and weird.

Yesterday I went to the tennis court and Israr who is a local Daur surprisingly came to the tennis court, wearing new clothes, he was celebrating eid, since there was none in the court except the ball pickers thus I had a good chat with him, I inquired about he and other locals celebrate eid. Israr told me that he and his two other brothers purchased sacrificial animals for 60,000 Rupees which includes one lamb and one cow. The eid is simple in the city and in the tribal villages, they sacrificed but all cannot do it because of financial limitations, but they in fact reared the sacrificial animal for a year. I remember the JCO I met at Butt Marka Post who had two lambs whom he was looking after for last four months. Thus in true sense they carry out this important ritual. The main and central eid prayers are held in the city; since it was Friday yesterday thus I also heard the sermon in Pashtu. There were few shops opened in the city as per Israr, people carry out sacrifice and then distribute the meat and also keep the rest with them, in winter it is possible but in summer it is difficult due to heat and lack of electricity.

Here within the Fort, I in any case woke up late and missed the prayers, now they have a lunch at JCO mess at 1200 hours where I am also invited. In the mess only myself, adjutant Captain Bilal and one air force officer Zia are present, rest all Ali the doctor, Saad and commandant all have gone on leave.

I am alone but then it is my own choosing, flash back of previous eids are coming, we never had a sacrifice because it was difficult to purchase the animal not financially but more of laziness, then to look after it and above all to sacrifice it. Even in Skardu where there was ample open space I had a lamb for some time but before eid I gave to a poor to do whatever he wants to do with it. It is a difficult task and in this is the real beauty of the ritual to be able to sacrifice your precious thing in the name of your creator.

Brigadier Shahid of artillery had warned about the incoming shelling from locals on the eid night but luckily his prophecy has not been true. Major General Abid Rafique came for a visit to Miranshah, stayed night in Tochi Mess, I met him for half an hour presented him with the book and had a cup of tea. In the discussion I think he is not very clear about the Tochi Valley but then almost majority are not, they all tends to relate this valley with the other like Swat but that is different even south Waziristan is different. Meeting old course mates is a pleasure, we were together in the SSG basic course, he is right to mention that time has passed. The other course mate Ali Abbas has shifted to the new complex at division; he had an operation of his knee and as such is restricted in his movement. As long as he was my neighbour or vice versa it was good to have a chat with him and not to forget his fridge, his laptop is still with me and I am having second thoughts whether I should keep for another week or hand over him today, he does not really need it but on the other hand I also don't feel very good in keeping it when he is in garrison.

On national level the prices of CNG have been drastically reduced and now I am having second thoughts about having a diesel Mercedes, it is expensive to maintain when you are jobless.

I had Bara Khana at the JCO's Mess of Tochi Scouts, nice of them that they invited me, mess is good nothing extraordinary about it, a board of instructions few paintings but importantly the pictures of all corps subedar majors, now I know the history behind every picture and corrected that Subedar Major Malanag Shah was awarded with a medal also which was not indicated, my friendship now I share with Naib Subedar Fazal Orakzai, I also like Subedar Khattak Qaum commander, Sharbat Khan was on leave. Food was also ordinary in taste but we took it while sitting in dastar khawan style this is the major difference between army and FC style, apples were too big in size, I mixed the salty and sweet rice together which was novelty for some but to others it was a sign of old army, JCO's had the food with spoon and fork, officers sat on one side and JCO's on other, I wanted to sit among them but then followed the customs of the corps.

After the food we all {Tariq, Rab Nawaz and myself} went to call on GOC Ali Abbass, Rab Nawaz insisted on my sitting in front of the vehicle, I really have to insist on their adhering to seniority, as a retired officer I am not entitled to any protocol but these officers insist on following it, nice of them. The hard fact is that they got commissioned in 1992 or later and I was already a major by that time. GOC was having food thus we had to wait outside, I could have gone inside as a course mate but I stick with my Tochi Colleagues, after fifteen minutes we went inside and left after fifteen minutes.

I later had two calls one to my mother and other to my father and also to Lieutenant Colonel Ahsan Janjua who is a very nice and fine person and also to Jawad but his phone went unanswered, I again call him at night but same answer, let's hope he is ok. Later I worked in library and saw Brigadier Khalil Dar along with Colonel Nasir {both aviators}. Khalil is the first officer to read my book Air Observation Post and he liked it, we sat for some time then I left him to be with his juniors, later he came to see the library, he is the only one who has shown any interest in purchase of the book for the base.

Later at night had a wonderful barbecue at Lieutenant Colonel Tariq Shinwari's home, excellent food, specially the Patka Tikka, it was lamb meat. Meat wrapped around the fat of the lamb. Later at night went to bed early thinking about my children and wife.

## **28<sup>th</sup> October 2012.**

Sitting in library, trying to make out the peace process that took place in the agency in 2006. From January 2006 onwards the attacks on military increased drastically with disastrous results for the military and simultaneously peace talks also started in which army initially was stubborn but later gave way in September 2006 by which the writ of Taliban was established along with army.

## **Full Moon 30<sup>th</sup> October 2012**

The full moon ordeal is going on, there is a controversy or debate among all of us and with 'all of us' I mean Brigadier Raza, Brigadier Shahid and myself, Colonel Wajahat would have been part of it but he is on leave.

Now see, the eid was on 10<sup>th</sup> of Zil Huj which in any case means it is 10<sup>th</sup> of moon, it was celebrated as such on 25<sup>th</sup>. In Saudi Arabia, the natives celebrated eid on 26<sup>th</sup> of October which was 11<sup>th</sup> of moon and we celebrated it on 27<sup>th</sup> October which makes it 12<sup>th</sup> of moon thus 29<sup>th</sup> of October should have been full moon but others insisted on it being full on 30<sup>th</sup>. Now Brigadier Raza is good in giving calculations that moon rises at such and such time and so on,; thus I agreed because in any case there is no logic in having discussion with an officer who is a brigadier and further more he had agreed to do photography for you.

Brigadier Raza has a good camera Nikon and I have seen some of his pictures thus I requested him to take few shots for me as well of full moon and he agreed. Thus on 29<sup>th</sup> October after the tennis game in which I am partner with Shahid and Raza and Major Nayyar of artillery are partners. My game is fair and I can give company to any one. We both moved to Mess and sat in the lawn, it was cold and moon was up but it was not coming into the right angle thus we had to wait for almost two hours sitting in the lawn waiting for it to reach the desired elevation. Again on 30<sup>th</sup> October we took few more shots at 1907 hours and Raza was able to capture the required shots.

Later at night I stared at the moon for some time as I have many memories with it, who knows when will I be able to see the moon full again.

### **31<sup>st</sup> October 2012**

Much ado nothing fits on me perfectly, the electricity is gone for last three days as Bakka Khel tribe have put iron ropes around it in their area. It is only the generator which is working but it has timings, it works or operates from 0900-1200 hours and then at night from 1900-2300 hours thus I have to finish my work and also the dinner by this time, in the morning it is only giving power to the office area thus I have to go there to charge my computer and once gone that means that no work can be performed other than verbal and cups of tea after tea.

In the evening at 1500 hours I go to Tennis court and come back at 1730 hours so little time left for writing but whatever time is there I am making full use of it.

I am now covering the year 2007 which was the worst in terms of violence in the agency, especially the months of July.

### **9<sup>th</sup> December 2012. Bannu Serai ,**

1810 hours. It is the end game, I am on way back to real world which I am not willing to do happily but this is the limitation of our age that we cannot even live in real world. I am wrong in stating that because I have read that a German by the name of Breininger was part of Taliban, think he was still under thirty, a man who wanted to be another Che Guevara, a man from Europe comes here, lives among

Taliban, those very same people about whom i know so little. It is not a question of hating him rather it is an issue of how can men live the life he likes. Best life is where there is a thrill, one can give an argument that thrill is in cricket also , I agree with him that every new fast ball is a potent threat , thus sports is one way of living as close to real world as possible. I know that next thing which comes to mind in terms of thrill is military life where every moment is a last moment; in some cases if not in majority of the cases.

We define thrilling life as a complete life not where one is living for brief period, moment or even decade. This is the limitation of military life. It does have an end, it have momentary periods of thrill then breaks of studies, leaves, courses and so on , same holds true for cricket or any other sports. I am of the opinion that greatest thrill that man ever had been when it steps down for the first time on moon. It was again the biggest but certainly had its own life had its own life time. This is not the case here in North Waziristan Agency, thrills starts with your birth itself. From your early days you are part of a feud, your life can settle a feud which is an obligation, age is not a criterion neither any question of morality is involved in it. It finishes with your death whenever it comes, at the age of eighty you are still part of the feud, your age is no excuse for your getting away from arena. In 2009 there were two brothers who came back to North Waziristan after lapse of almost five years from abroad and they had their thrill I think on the second last day of their leave when they came ina cross fire. However these things one can enjoy even at Karachi which is no different from North Waziristan Agency in this regard. Karachi fits in ideally in this scenario of thrill but comparing to NWA it is still galaxies away.

I awoke up this morning because I had to come back to Bannu onwards to Peshawar-Rawalpindi-Gujranwala- Lahore and in between mother, father, book composer, my faculty, friends, my car, high cost of gasoline, loneliness, memories, loves and hates and so on. Certainly not a welcome thought but book has to be printed nad for this I have to come. I would have gone last week also but then Wajahat had the idea of myself having a meeting with IGFC Major General Ghayour, not a bad idea and I in any case needed this last week to polish the draft. It was good, Ghayour is typical Pathan general having lot of stories, other wise he still looks like a boy. Then two days back two Tochi Scouts walked away from Bangidar towards the Zero point to fetch some items without even bothering to carry weapons, they were abducted and this was an anti climax. In the morning Afsar Khan waiter when I asked about commandant told me that last night the dead body of one has been received and his funeral prayers are at 0900 hours. This havildar was Turi a Shia and our biggest fear in last two days was that he will not be spared merely due to this fact that he is Shia. Other's afte is still unknown so far.

With this back ground I left Tochi with heavy heart, had fare well hand shake with all because they were sitting in the mess lawn, commandant, wing commanders Tariq & Rab Nawaz, Major Zamir, Brigadier Waseem and colonel staff . Fear of IED is another factor, because of violation of SOPs the Bangidar incident had taken place also so much study of the last seven years made you wise where nothing can be taken as granted. I was given a jeep in which I had painter Laiq, scout Yasin and another driver. Chashmai bridge, Sarbankai Post, Isha, Gosh, Hassu Khel, Kamar, Idak, Naurak, MirAli, and sorry we had a halt at Naurak . All of a sudden the convoy halted at a climb, leading vehicle halted and all braked within feet of each other. Captain got down, he looked smart in his jungle hat but that is not what is required here, here it is helmet. Meanwhile almost all drivers jumped down from their vehicles as if they are driving civil vehicles, few ran forward all without weapons. One odd had a weapon but it was not in combat style or as per teaching. Military Police soldier also moved ahead, he was also without



weapon. My own scout switched off the vehicle and after few moment got down he was also without weapon.

In the morning when we left Mess in this jeep the very first question I asked was whether you are having any weapon and he sheepishly said no, I kept quite, we stopped in front of lines and I saw two trucks of scouts in front with troops sitting, now after such interaction it looked odd that I should travel alone in tis jeep so I indicated one to join us and two joined; one of them was Laiq whom I have only seen in civil dress painting on walls so it took some time to recognise that he is the same one. I was more comfortable because these two ahd rifles with them and I inquired about the number of rounds they were carrying sixty each. Now you can understand my anxiety when the convoy halted and all drills and procedures which I have been reading in last two months porously were in front of me being violated as if they never existed. No convoy distance, none got out to take all round protection and troops were sitting as if nothing will happen. In my mind 2007 ambush was going on, it again took place in 2008,2009,2010 and even in 2011. My eyes were scanning the growth on my left and on my right also. At one o' clock position a high mound with even a more formidable castle stood, on my left a green patch with bushes separated the house all within a RPG-7 strike range. Few boys playing but who now vanished then I some men, my ears were now listening and picking up whistles, yet life was moving around me. One vehicle had a tyre puncture and it was not carrying the spare tyre. I narrated history to others scouts about how things go wrong, I indirectly warned them to be mentally ready for anything. After ten minutes we all moved forward.

After MirAli our own tyre bursted, I felt it during the turn, it was good that driver was driving slow otherwise the consequences would have been different. I told Laiq to get his weapon ready , he willingly took my suggestion. I saw few khassadars catching fish in the algal. I walked towards the Double Bridge and starting taking photographs , meanwhile they change the tyre. We did not had any water and I curse myself for overlooking such fundamental issue. Area is green and wide. Only two weeks age a tank was hit with an IED near Mirali resultantly two soldiers from 29 Cavalry died. You cannot find an IED here, when we left MiranShah and even before Chashami there is a wood selling place with heaps of wood for winter warmth on sale, how can you find a IED among this stack of wood spread over so wide area.

## **Chitral, Khyber & Kurram 2013 - 2014**

### **Chapter I**

I am sitting at Infusion Cell in Balahisar Fort, it is popularly known as Confusion Cell, outside it is pleasant, and being Friday the scouts are preparing for Friday prayers. Next to me the scout is watching the last night recordings of jet aircraft poundings of miscreants hideouts in Tirah Valley not very far from here. The whole area is not visible to operators through the Google Earth thus an aerial reconnaissance of such areas is carried out using C-130 aircraft of air force or King Jet of army aviation. These videos are then scrutinised here and targets selected for air force or artillery. Sounds impressive and it is but it is being done in a relaxed manner with a pair of parrots also sharing the cell apart from four wall mounted screens which are now being used for cable watching.

This cell was incorporated with the help of Americans who brought all this equipment , a huge coloured printer for printing maps, screens to monitor the live video of drone or other aerial information or mission, in short a kind of their own operational room. Now they have gone and work has slowed down but now it has been tuned to own requirement and technical capability.

I came here almost two weeks ago.

**21<sup>st</sup> May 2013. FC Mess Peshawar, 2300 hours.**

Electricity has just arrived, it will likely to stay for another two hours before it runs away for an hour and then comes back, this drama will last whole night and it is going on for last five years. It is hot and terrible; not surprisingly the ruling political parties have been washed away in this general elections for this sole reason. One has to think about the millions living in the inner and old city with having no means to buy the generator or any other source to keep the lights working and running the affairs of daily life.

This is my third night here in the mess, I am here to write the history of the Frontier Corps, I came driving in my Mercedes from Islamabad, after spending hours with Jehangir mechanic, all the way my eyes were on the temperature gauge and I did not had a sigh of relief even once. My ordeal can be understood only by those who have old cars and especially those which if break down on highway can neither be pushed and nor be rectified.

All along it was darkness, town and villages giving bleak look although the euphoria of having the first free and fair election in which the Patahns have elected a new political party Tehreek Insaaf of Imran Khan into power in the province with Nawaz Shariff in power at centre, [electricity has gone again after just fifteen minutes] just imagine the state of mind of ordinary person in such situation. It is inhumane, barbaric and unjustifiable in this heat with modern construction forestalling any movement of air conditioner.

The very first night which was two nights ago in this mess , I had to open the windows which I believe were closed since years as is obvious from the dust, my room is called Tochi , it is the last room on the top floor with windows on both ends, one lacks fly and other was jammed. One can bear the weather provided if one lives accordingly but unfortunately our lifestyle is all too banking upon the air

### **Bala Hisar Fort**

I am sitting inside it right now rather I am at its top. I came here first time in 1993 with my wife, son who was just few months old and mother in law; not much has changed inside the fort or outside , it is the beauty of the city that it gives such an impression on the other hand quite a work has been done inside the fort with a new mosque and new lines for scouts both made artistically in classical red brick style; it was done by last inspector general of Frontier Corps Major General Nadir Zeb.

My job is to compile the history of Frontier Corps , while going through the history compilation of Tochi Scouts I read quite a lot and as such I can claim to have a fair amount of knowledge about the area and the corps. I know that in 1951 the efforts were made to have the history of the corps, again in sixties, seventies and then in nineties same efforts were floated which finally resulted in the publishing of book frontier Guardian by Major Muhammad Nawaz. However when I inquired nothing was traceable regarding those efforts or data. On the other hand , the 11 Corps started or initiated a plan to archive the history and similarly army under General Kayani also took keen interest in the archiving and establishing a museum, it is these external factors which resulted in FC having a very sound and good draft of present conflict.. Efforts of Colonel Mamun, Lieutenant Colonel Azhar of education corps are worth mentioning in the compilation of the draft. The input all came from the corps and now I intend putting all of it in a chronological fashion.

There is a museum also here, a unique one in terms of design and quite rich in terms of the artifacts all dealing with FC. A small very small library is also existing next to the museum; other than this it is all bleak.

The weather in these two weeks remained hot very hot but then all of a sudden it rain last week and now it is bearable although the famous dust layer is still hanging around the Peshawar Bowl. Peshawar is a rather strange kind of vale, it is bounded on all sides by medium level mountains but the bowl itself is very wide and very fertile, the circumference must be in tens of miles. As I see it now towards the northern direction all I can see from this height is a sea of green with attitude almost level, a dust wall obstructs my view but when it is clear as it was yesterday then the mountains can be observed which are approximately thirty –forty miles away. Through these mountains exists passes or more precisely the river flows like River Kabul which runs in a west-east direction and joins with river swat almost ten –fifteen miles north east of Peshawar at Charsadda. The famous Khyber Pass is on the west of

city, the pass leading towards the Chitral onwards to the Wakhan is in northern direction and can be detoured via Mardan in the eastern direction also.

This is the natural lake of human habitat, the water pours down from the high mountains of central Asia which looks surprising and deceptively close from Bala Hisar and this the magic of Peshawar that one tends to shrink the distance towards north. The crow distance is not much in any case, Chitral is 45 minutes away on a propeller driven aircraft, Kabul is also at same distance. Kashmir also looks closer; the hard fact is that once you cross River Indus than you are in a different frame of mind.

### **Balahisar Fort Days**

Most mysterious past like many pathan, there is very little written record about it not even in provincial archives. The most solid evidence is a black and white picture of probably first afghan war, surprisingly rare painting is also missing at least in the Frontier Corps at present. The picture shows a mud bricked fort of almost a replica of present , which is brick lined by the British when they took over the Balahisar in 1845. Apparently it was made in present form between 1850-1865; for the reason that no such account is mentioned in Colonel Warburton's account of almost a quarter of century lasting till the end of century.

Peshawar and Balahisar are both interwoven with each other in the quilt of history and both have to be analyzed as such. Peshawar deviates against the universal wisdom of having city being evolved on the bank of river ; Lahore & Multan are classic examples , all three have forts and an ancient past. Peshawar thus was never a planned city and nor a trade route; Charsadda which lies almost ten miles north of Peshawar on the banks of River Kabul and river Swat is the more logical old hub of movements between the Indus Valley and higher mountainous civilization.

Balahisar Fort thus emerged as the southern out post of the Charsadda guarding the Khyber Pass, Tirah {present day Khyber Agency}; their were further satellite outpost forts as well. The big question is why Balahisar is mud bricked in 1840 picture; almost all the forts were bricked lined, look at Attock Fort built by Akbar the Great in 1630 on the banks of river Indus, Rohtas Fort by Sher Shah Suri in 1540 thus the mystery deepens as to why this important fort was not fortified or why Peshawar was not given the importance to have fortification.

Peshawar's rise to present fame starts with the Afghan Wars before that it was just a caravan serai marching towards or down from the mountains through Khyber Pass or more precisely the Afridi Tribe along with Shinwari, Shalmanzi and Mullagori. Mohmand tribe's tarakzai branch owns 14000 acres in four villages around Peshawar. British experience from 1850 onwards at Peshawar was not pleasant mainly due to poor hygienic conditions of the city which chiefly was due to lack of water source. Municipal committees and Deputy Commissioners dug well in the city for drinking water just like we have water purification plants today at different parts f city. Cholera and other epidemics including malaria were common. Theft and robbery were the favourite past time of the vagabond tribesmen. Religious sentiments were high but always within limit only four attempted murders on British officers in twenty years till 1899.

Michni and Nawagai passes are the historical passes through which the Alexander the Great's army marched down. It should be kept in mind that there were two flanks, one led by Alexander himself

which marched down towards Peshawar in a wide northern move through Nawagai pass, the other two Greek generals then led the other prong through the Michni and Khyber Passes.; all marched and followed with water source {River Kabul & Swat} less the Khyber Pass formation which debouches on to the Peshawar. It should be kept in mind that nothing of Alexander's history has survived in its original version and the best considered among academic world is that of Arrian's but it was written after almost 300 years in 70 AD, therefore nothing is authentic other than the dictates of geography.

One of the oldest Buddhist ruins are located here including the Ashoka's pillars in the close vicinity of Peshawar but even in more close proximity of Charsadda, the Takht Bhai ruins. Similarly one such stupa is also on the top of a hillock overlooking the Khyber Pass road connecting Peshawar with Kabul.

Fort is in three layers each higher than the other till gets an elevation of 200 feet, the elevation of Peshawar itself is 1800 feet thus a good observatory is created, one feels secure inside and it is peaceful too a bit isolated. I am now having a fort mentality. My scanning has been constantly towards the north-western quarters because I sit in Infusion Cell which has a glass window panel overlooking the western direction. Sitting on revolving chair one gets the feeling of being on a ship deck. The horizon is all dusty with visibility uptill twenty miles. By evening it further improves and silhouettes of Khyber becomes obvious. On the south of Peshawar are the Afridis of Dara Adam Khel who in a crescent encircles the Peshawar till the centre of Balahisar Fort entrance gate, from there onwards the Mohmand's area starts. Shinwaris and Mulagori are another two tribes who live on the northern edge of Afridis, they thus control the mouth of River Kabul, the left bank is with Mohmand Tribe.

At the gate there is one sentry wearing white helmet who opens the gate but I in the first day had gone through the whole procedure, even now when I go there by rickshaw I had to follow the procedure. It is okay nothing extraordinary about it, but I am sure they can alert others. The outer wall of the fort especially the front face has been given a face lift by Nadir Zeb Major General. The present entrance is ascending and winding with three turns or ghulam Gardesh'. In reality the fort had an old entrance similar to Lahore Fort's entrance but on less grandeur, it is visible today and stands out along the whole front wall; this seems to be the royal entrance and the present entrance is at slightly lower level and used for the troops movement; fort had gates at each layer which was closed down at the night, this procedure is not in vogue as only one main gate is closed. Other day while coming out of the canteen which is located at the top plateau as well, I noticed a sliding pathway with a gate at the end, the length is not more than hundred feet. Thus other exist from the fort. At present the toilets are constructed on the second layer which are used by the troops. This gate is being used for that purpose. I went down and observe the layer, it is wide enough to have accommodation as well. On the eastern side is the grave or ziaart of a holy man; it was a graveyard in the past. The civil population or the fort attendant had their accommodation on the second layer. This included soldiers, followers and officials. It provides ample space all along the citadel. The first layer similarly must have been the residential area of followers camp, stables and so on.

### **Living inside the Balahisar**

On my very first day I requested Colonel Mamoon to allot me a living room inside the fort as I wanted to savour the lifestyle of the fort, there are two rooms one is under use of fort security officer and other is a small duty officer bunk thus I have to live inside the mess.

The top plateau is wide enough to hold a divisional headquarters and in old time should have been the royal residence. There is hardly any building of old time left untouched, all have false ceilings, glass windows, the toilets are hardly attached with offices at least in old pattern construction. I had a round of the area, first I had to find the tailor to get my clothes stitched and from there I went in search of cobbler and this took me to the remote, neglected and hidden part of the area. Tailor is in the barrack where as the cobbler has a tin roof hut. The field mess kitchen is impressive. And so are the waiters. There are very few visitors during the office time although there is a regular flow of visitors for IGFC. I have met him twice in last two weeks and I am very at ease with him. He likes to talk and listen as well, young and courteous. He has no idea the kind of mental torture I had with the mess and military transport branches. His office is spacious, they have created a kind of garden by having plants outside the main glass wall and then putting a tarpal over it. The staff officer and a visitor waiting room the old jirga room are part of the office block. Another office block which is a new construction houses full colonels and deputy, all have glass windows and attached toilets.

Jirga room and adjoining infusion cell are new construction, jirga hall is impressive but washrooms stinks, the main mosque and living lines are the centre of attraction, both stylish and elegant in design, mosque now occupies the centre of the courtyard which is at a lower level along with the vehicles parking area/

There is a one dish lunch everyday which I am not sure whether it is on the house or on officers, in fact FC is so big hearted in this manner and that one often thinks of it in such pattern. Modern mind may call it wastage of resources or accountability or Tax payers money and so on but let it not be forgotten that everything is not related with tax money only, FC captures huge quantity of drugs and other smuggled items which enhances the national exchequer as well. The point to bring home is that when you live in old building like Balahisar Fort than your life pattern and working habits are influenced by historical values.

Peshawar is a scary city more so when you read enough to understand that everyone is not that classic pathan who will protect your life at the peril of his own. We think that as long as one is protecting your life he is good, it is not like here in Peshawar. It is primitive in nature to say, dusty and dirty. I spent three days in Saddar, one day searching for a bag and next for a digital camera.

I came to Peshawar first in 1979 with a school debating team which included myself, Habib Ansari and Ahmed Hayat the present GOC of 40 Division. We had a walk in the Saddar, ate flying saucers which were sandwich in nature and generally admire the city which looked so different from Karachi from where we have come. Pen pistols were the favorite item for youngsters and I was no exception. I had heard about Peshawar in 1972 rather it will not be out of context if I say that from my childhood in Punjab I was warned about these patahans, they kidnap children was the biggest fear inculcated in our minds. Later on in Karachi I came to know that the family which lives on the ground floor, one widow, her son, daughter and many others, her husband was killed by a hired killer who after killing just walk away to Ilaqa Ghair; my biggest fantasy at that time was to see this ilaqa ghair and what all I can manage there where there is no law.

In 1981 I came here twice once I stayed with my parents friend at Ghazi near Tarbela who took us all along the frontier including Peshawar and Swat, next I came with my uncle and family and again we went to Swat. I had an unusual experience then, I was a teen aged and I walked towards a spot where

pathan families were having picnic and I was warned by a member of that family wearing weapon to buzz off and I did. My aunt was posted here, her husband was a colonel in then martial law and they were residing in the MPA hostel. I then ventured into ilaqa ghair on a motorcycle. I had a miraculous survival after I crashed my bike on the road due to over speeding.

In military academy the cadets comes here, I also did but my real stay was here in 1992 when I was posted here in the flying squadron , was newly married and hooked onto hashish. I saw the city at night , at dawn at all times, I flew over it un countless times, read about it, attended local parties also, had a date with a pathan girl also yet I had no pathan friend in real sense other than Javed who had a weapon and Hashish shop in ilaqa ghair which is next to the Hayatabad. The old Bara or ilaqa ghair was towards the south west of the city and it was half a n hour drive with dusty and pucca shops filled with foreign clothes, cigarettes, cosmetics, electronics were functional. At that time and it lasted well into mid nineties that people from Punjab come here for shopping. The new karkhano market as it is known today was almost non existent in early eighties. After commissioning in 1984 in an air defence regiment at Sargodha, one of our regiment 95 was here at Peshawar which included Captain Rizwan, captain Javed to name, other regiment 13 Light was at Risalpur thus a ready flow of travelling. My own unit officer and my very close friend Captain Samee Khan was living in Peshawar thus I became close to it.

There used to be regular bus service between Sargodha and Peshawar via Khushab area. Bus used to leave Peshawar at mid night and reaches Sargodha early in morning, once myself and Samee Khan along with Rizwan travelled on it. Through Samee Khan I came to know that there is prostitution in the city also. Tassadaq had plenty of such stories to narrate, I saw with my own eyes an officer hooking a girl and then having regular dates. Thus that image of piety was shaken. When I was posted here from Karachi I had long walks on beach with my friends and I highlighted what I am expecting here; I was mentally shaken how to start a married life in Peshawar. My wife who happens to be a air force family spent almost all her life here in Peshawar and Kohat without learning any Pashtu word was working in military hospital as doctor.

I remained here for two years and it was fantastic in all sense. My son was born here and spent couple on months before we were posted to Multan. I was impressed with Peshawar in many ways , first thee was never any fight among males, I saw university boys wearing sherwani and vacating seats for elders, girls beautiful and many tales were narrated about them by the bachelor officers of the squadron. One of the squadron officer was having a rough time with a local girl and in the end the officer was given letter of thanks by the army. I have walked through the city at all odd times, I have watched porn and smoke hashish in the Bilours cinema, Peshawar in short was hub of all evil vices, drugs, weapons, porn, smuggling , fake currency, stolen cars and so on; but there was no fear in the air . There was always a difficulty in finding a transport at odd hours, at night it seems as if the city just shuts up. There used to be regular traffic of foreigners at least till 1979, I saw them wandering on the city streets with pathan shop keepers high on hashish just staring at the white girls although clad in decent hippie wardrobe.

## **Mahsud Scouts. Chapter II. May 2013**

My first stop was at Mahsud Scouts or the Khyber Agency. Irony is that none is familiar with Mahsud scouts, i have been hearing there name quite often from my friend Brigadier Sardar who was pushing me to write the history of them but i was reluctant as in my opinion the corps is not old enough in reality i had very feeble knowledge about them. Living in Balahisar one gets into a routine and i came out of the inertia by opting to visit the closet corps Mahsud scouts. On Friday the vehicle came there was one officer major Imran who happened to be from Air defence keeping long hair, we went together in the convoy comprising of two vehicles.

**Karkhano Market** at the edge of settled areas of Frontier capital Peshawar is a classic display and proof of how the tribes have been pacified. The area west of Peshawar after twenty miles is the area of Afridi tribe, this territory then extends for another thirty odd miles further west and encompasses Durand Line and more importantly the Khyber Pass that allows trans mountain ranges movement or between the Afghanistan and Pakistan. Area west of Peshawar is like a bowl with edge of bowl starting at twenty miles with mountain tentacles. Besai Ridge divides this western extremity into two halves, the area on the north of this half leads to the Khyber Pass through Jamrud however the other half of Besai ridge is known as Bara Valley and is the most commercial in the whole Durand Line or tribal area. In Bara valley lives the six clans out of eight clans of Afridi and even among them the Shalobar, Malik Din Khel are on the edge and as such have more control of the commerce, Kuki Khel controls the Khyber Pass at Landi Kotal .

This disparity of having trade opportunities among the clans can have variable outcomes, the less blessed tribes can resort to theft and robbery or they can be coaxed into joining the government jobs or they can be given lands to open their own markets and this is the way the tribal belt has been interfaced into the settled areas since 1849 when Punjab was annexed and Peshawar already under the Sikh rule and governed by a French Governor attained the position of being the Frontier Town between the British India and Kingdom of Afghanistan. Peshawar then was a city of thieves and diseases apart from gardens. It had acute shortage of water for drinking other than the administration of Sikhs was well established with forward fort at Jamrud the eastern mouth of Khyber Pass, Hari Singh Nalwa had advanced ten miles further west at Ali Masjid the midpoint of the pass but was defeated and killed in field.

It took us not more than twenty minutes from Peshawar to reach the Fort Salop. The track sneaks out from the rear gate of the frontier corps establishment area at Hayatabad crosses a road and follows a track. There is now a wall surrounding the whole Hayatabad complex extending almost towards the Bara Bazar, it is like Berlin Wall in a sense as there exist two distinct cultures on both side of wall. The western end of the area beyond the wall is the Khyber Agency which has its Bara Tehsil here. On a broad spectrum the main road leading from Peshawar – Torkham-Kabul originates from this point, area on the south of the road is the Bara Tehsil which extends further south. Presently it is the hot bed of miscreant activities and my destination is this valley.

We passed in front of Shakas fort which is a new construction as it dates back to mid eighties and practically road terminates here , ahead is a narrow pass and then road takes a dip and first habitation is contacted which is rather well built, solid house, thick growth of jungle trees none bearing fruit or grand



in height but gives over all a green colour to the eyes. Town is like any normal town in Frontier, none was carrying weapons, children going or coming from school wearing white uniform which is a rare scene as all wear militia colour in school but it is probably a private school. We drove farther and these last few miles before the Fort Salop are the dangerous areas, many blast have taken place here so are ambushes. The track is narrow, dusty and sharp turns, it is rather flat and slightly elevated from the ground, visibility is reduced due to thick growth of bushes. The mental state in such moments is alarming, one expects a blast at any moment, a firing burst coming and hitting the vehicle has all the probability, nothing can be taken for granted. My heart beat accelerates, eyes searching for anything unusual, however I had no weapon with me and therefore all these were just basic instincts. The fort all of a sudden emerges out of nowhere; few shops outside which at some time not long ago were bustling with life now deserted. The sentry opened the gate and we entered inside. There is a sigh of relief which every one takes when ever they reach back into the safety and comfort of the fort

**Mahsud Scouts** look after the south western approach towards Peshawar, it is part of Khyber Agency and its headquarters is at Fort Salop approximately twenty miles south west of Peshawar. MS {Mahsud Scouts} were raised on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1937 at Razmak as a 5th Mahsud Road Construction Battalion. These battalions were raised in mid thirties in Waziristan mainly to induct the native tribes into military there by creating goodwill by providing jobs. On the other hand certain tribes were not fully trusted to the extent to raise full fledged battalions; Mahsud Battalion was a road construction unit mainly and chiefly task for road construction.

### **Khajauri Campaign 1930 .**

Fort Salop It is the home of Mahsud Scouts, they occupied it in 1961 but the fort has a history of its own. It was constructed in 1930 as a result of Khajauri Operations. The plains of Baar Valley are also known as Khajauri Plains, Khajauri means Date palm.

On 23rd April 1930, the British army opened fire on the Red Shirts in Qisa Khwani Bazar, Peshawar. Somehow, a rumour spread that three Afridis were also killed who had gone to Peshawar for receipt of their allowances. Frontier conflicts in majority of the cases are result of rumours and this was no exception.

A meeting of Afridi took place in Bagh Masjid Tirah, on 2nd May 1930 and it was decided to send a lashkar to attack Peshawar. Two to seven thousand armed Afridis got collected in Khajuri Plain. They collected at Spin Kamar, Malakdin Khel and Kambar Khel were the chief movers. They started going towards Peshawar by 30 May in small parties along Bara River. On 5th June 1930, they contacted British forces on the Western outskirts of Peshawar cantonment, Fighting took place for four days and the lashkar was dispersed. Another Lashkar assembled on 05 August and attacked on 13th August 1930 and fighting with British forces continued for about six days resulting in loss of life and property. The British used artillery to disperse the tribesmen. By 20th August about 250 Afridis including 2 old women even reached Peshawar city. The Supply Depot in Cantonment was also attacked. Sir Edwin Pears, chief commissioner of Peshawar, recommended to the Government of the India that Tirah should be occupied<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Nawaz Major, Frontier Guardian, Frontier Corps publication, 1994.

The Afridis are a famous, large and powerful tribe, they live in the area called Tirah, which is about 900 square miles of hilly country, to their west is the Province of Ningrahar, and to their south lies Kurrum Agency. The Afridis are divided into eight major clans: Adam Khel, Aka Khel, Kamar Khel, Kambhar Khel, Kuki Khel, Malikdin Khel, Sipah and Zakha Khel. The major portion of the Afridi tribe lives on east of Durand Line, with the exception of a small portion of the Zakha Khels, who have their villages in Ningrahar Province across the mountain, through which the Durand Line is marked.

The Government of India formed a committee on 20th September 1930. In January 1931, the committee decided that occupation of Tirah would be unsound politically. As such, occupation of the Khajuri Plain only, was recommended, On 9th December 1931, final sanction was given. General Coleridge started the occupation operation immediately which lasted till 31st March 1931. Consequently roads were constructed on the Khajuri Plain. Some permanent military posts were also established at Fort Salop and other places. On 3rd October 1931, an agreement between the British and Afridis was signed at Jamrud and the British army action came to an end. Fort Salop was named after the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, the British unit which consolidated the area of Karawal etc. During the operation three Brigade size camps were established at Bara Fort, Karawal and Miri Khel. Commander-in-Chief India, Field Marshal Lord Birdwood, also visited troops at Bara Fort, A medal of North West Frontier Campaign 1930-31 was issued after the occupation of Khajuri plain.

The occupation of Khajuri initiated by British took a permanent shape and continued till to date

## History

Mahsud Scouts have a convoluted history; it was raised as 5<sup>th</sup> Mahsud Road Construction Battalion on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1937 at Razmak as part of Waziristan Command. It was an army unit having army table of organization and equipment. British had raised four such battalions in the Waziristan from 1935 onwards. These battalions had one thing unique; they were not armed with any weapon rather these were road construction battalions wholly consisted of Mahsud Tribe and commanded by a British officer, 5<sup>th</sup> Mahsud battalion was raised and commanded by **Major R.S.Jhonson** for a year before the battalion itself underwent transition; it was put under Frontier Corps control from Army in April 1938.

The very first task undertaken by the battalion was the construction of Razmak cantonment extension and hutted accommodation. With this change of command another important feature was a change in name, now it was simply known as the Mahsud Battalion still only armed with shovel and pick. One of the key lesson of Frontier warfare has been to keep an eye on the composition of native tribes in militia; no single tribe to have predominate majority and secondly to maintain a balance between the cis frontier and cross frontier tribes within a militia in Frontier Corps. Mahsud battalion was an exception as it still remained wholly composed of Mahsud. Mahsud battalion after Razmak took part in the construction of Nowshehra Ammunition Depot in 1940-41 and then took part in the construction of anti tank defence at Thall in 1941-42 which can be seen even today. Oghi –Durband road construction was another major project undertaken by the battalion. It was seldom employed in unity rather field construction companies were spread out within the frontier carrying out construction of roads and buildings especially the camps.

Another battalion 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud Battalion was also raised in 1944 during the dying days of Second World War It was raised at Sararogha in June 1944 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel R.E.F.G North thus the old 5<sup>th</sup> battalion which had become only Mahsud battalion was now known as First mahsud Battalion . It was the good experience of the First mahsud which had in fact laid the foundation of the second battalion. Both shared similar cultural traits and were known as Mizh thus the Mahsud Battalions were known as' Mizh Mahsud ' It is a Pakhtu word meaning 'we'. Mizh has become an expletive with the Mahsud who would always say 'Mizh mahsud, i.e. 'we Mahsud' it conveys unity and cohesion which is an outstanding characteristic of the Mahsud. There are main tribes of Mahsud – Alizai, Shaman Khel and Bahlolzai; collectively all three are known as 'Dre Mahsud' [three Mahsud]. One platoon of Urmars was also part of Mizh Mahsud; Urmars are non Mahsud but are affiliated to Shaman Khel.<sup>3</sup> The main tasks were construction of roads, airfields, ammunition depot and other similar works of construction and maintenance.

On independence the battalion was busy in the construction of Balakot road. The heroic deeds of the battalion during the first Kashmir War of 1947-1948 are one of the golden chapters of its history. It was unarmed yet when the opportunity arises of helping the brother Muslims in the Kashmir the Mahsud rushed forward. The battalion was not officially employed in the war rather the scouts were encouraged to take part in the liberation of Kashmir voluntarily. From November 1947 onwards when Gilgit Scouts had carried out the war of liberation in Gilgit and Baltistan which resulted in the war being stretched to the limit in the extreme north , it was then that the battalion was given the task of constructing and improving the existing track leading to Gilgit; Babusar Pass .

Major Mir Badshah Mahsud and Subedar Major Muhammad Akbar Mahsud wrote the very first chapter of Mahsud's bravery under Frontier Corps. Major Badshah was decorated with Fakhr-i-Kashmir, hilal-1- Kashmir and Imtiaz Sanad for his excellent command of Mahsud. Subedar Major Muhammad Akbar was decorated with Sitara-i- Jurat; he is the very first Mahsud to be decorated with such decoration. Words about Major Mir Badshah, there were two officers with same name and both commanded 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud battalions. One Major Bad Shah MBE is from Baluch regiment who commanded 2<sup>nd</sup> mahsud from 14<sup>th</sup> October 1952 – 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1953 and again from August 1953 – November 1953, the other Major Badshah is from General List and commanded 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud from 1951-1959<sup>4</sup>.

Both the Mizh Mahsud were employed in Titwal Sector, 2<sup>nd</sup> mahsud Battalion was decorated with Tamgha –i- Difa. After the cease fire these battalions were back to construction of road so vital for the maintenance of troops in forward areas. Mr Liaqat Ali Khan during his visit to the Dir in November 1949 has the distinction of visiting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud Battalion; he was presented with Rupees 500 by the battalion as a contribution in Quaid-e- Azam memorial fund. Twelve mile long road that connects Garhi Habibullah to Balakot was completed in 1955; it took three years of hard work by the Mizh Mahsud. Another remarkable feather in the cap is the construction of 17 miles long and arduous road connecting Lowari Top with Mirkani Post took five years and was commissioned in 1960. Lowari Top road was initially constructed by the 1<sup>st</sup> mahsud Battalion in 1949 it connects Dir with Chitral. Malakand hydro-electric project was initiated in 1950 and was completed by end 1952 by the 1<sup>st</sup> mahsud Battalion, similarly Kaghan Valley road was initiated in 1953 later the project was abandoned.

<sup>3</sup> The Frontier Corps an Introduction, Code No FCP-1, a Frontier Corps publication, 1967. P-166.

<sup>4</sup> Frontier Corps an introduction, p-161.

12<sup>th</sup> September 1960 is a historic day for the Mahsud battalions, on this very day these Mahsud were combatised, mortars and machine guns took the place of pick and shovels. It was the Dir –Bajaur campaign of 1960-1961 which was instrumental in this transition. Mizh Mahsud took active part in the operations. From Dir the 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud moved to Kalat on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1964, a successful Brampta was carried out by the 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1964 in Dansar area which is part of Jhalwan. One Tamgha-i- Basalt and one Imtiaz Sanad was sarkar's award to the 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud.

**1965 War** once again saw Mizh Mahsud on the eastern border, it was only 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud Scouts which was employed on the border and were awarded with one Tamgha-i-Basalat { PA 4821 Capatin Sikander Khan } and one President's Commendation Certificate.<sup>5</sup> It was on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1965 when the Mahsud Battlions were formally converted into Mahsud scouts thus 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud Battalion became 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud Scouts and so forth.

Fort Salop was the permanent station of 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud Scouts whereas after the Kalat operations the 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud was stationed at Shelabagh which is 60 miles from Quetta and 17 miles short of Chaman. The main tribes around the area are Kakars, Achakzais, Ghilzais and Baluchis.

### **1971 War**

In 1971 War, almost 2560 scouts from FC were sent to former East Pakistan, where new wings were raised. 26 scouts each from Mahsud Scouts were part of the contingent. No. 2 Mahsud Scouts was deployed on Western Frontiers, it was not a single entity rather in piecemeal. Some of his scouts were sent to East Pakistan and few were attached with No.2 Mahsud Scouts; collectively they wrote the finest chapter of this fabulous corps. There were fourteen platoons in No.1 Mahsud Scouts, four each of Mahsuds, Afridis, Bhattani and two of Brohis similar was the pattern in the other Mahsud Scouts

Mizh Mahsud were deployed at Mendar in Azad Kashmir, ably led by officers specially Captain Mujeeb Faqir Ullah Khan who embraced shahadat and was decorated with Sitara –i-Jurat so were lance Naik Wali Zar and Sepoy Abdul Haleem Brohi. No less than eighteen mahsud scouts embraced shahadat here.

### **1974.**

1974 is a momentous year in the history of Pakistan when the country was host to the Islamic Summit Conference at Lahore. On a lesser level but something of far reaching value was the bifurcation of the frontier Corps into the Frontier corps Baluchistan and frontier Corps NWFP. Thus 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud which was already based in Shelabagh was amalgamated into the FC Balochistan and 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud Scouts became part of FC NWFP ; till 1981 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud Scouts was known as such but from this year onwards it was simply known as Mahsud Scouts.

In November 1974 the Mizh Mahsud was upgraded from one wing to three wing corps, thus the majority of pathan scouts of First Mahsud Scouts were incorporated in to the Second Mahsud Scout. The class composition was also altered with Afridi and Khattak having six platoons each, Turi having four, Orakzai , Mahsud , Mohmand and Bangash having three each, Mangal, Khalil Mohmand and Shilmani having two each.

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<sup>5</sup> Frontier Corps an introduction, published 1967, pp156-167.

### **Dir Operation 1976**

In 1976 Dir operation, the Corps also took part and accomplished the task assigned without suffering any casualty and won the praise of all. In March/April 1976, the Panj Pir issue arose, the anti-Panj Pir faction formed large lashkar and started burning the houses of Panj Pirs in Khajuri plain. The government took serious view of this and directed to prevent the anti-Panj Pir faction from taking law in their hands. Mahsud Scouts came to the aid of political agent and its troops were deployed at Dogra post area to prevent the Afridis lashkar from destroying the Alam Gudar factory area. Apart from this, Mahsud Scouts also succeeded in preventing the lashkars from further burning the houses of Panj Pirs in the Khajuri plain and the situation was brought to normal without any loss.

In July 1981 one wing was transferred to the Mohmand Rifles which again altered the composition the major change was the increase of Shilmani tribe which now had five platoons and Afridi strength was reduced to four platoons.

Corps was composed of two wings numbered 24 and 25 wings each having a strength of 698 scouts. Wings were commanded by majors, each wing had four rifle companies commanded by junior commissioned officers, rifle company was composed and organised on having three platoons and a platoon headquarters. A field battery was integral to the corps having a strength of 110 gunners who all were scouts, battery had 25 pounder guns. In the authorisation table the corps was supposed to have 20 officers and 55 JCOs along with 1559 scouts, 112 NCE and 15 NCu apart from 30 clerks; the most serious deficiency was in the category of officers. A lieutenant colonel was in command, major as his adjutant and quartermaster with another three or four captains performing as wing commanders. One medical officer was also part of the organisation.

Work load was not much but it was diversified, being reserves of IGFC the option of being deployed and employed anywhere in Pakistan was a reality and in later years Mahsud Scouts remained deployed in Sindh for well over three years in early nineties. Later when the corps was upgraded to three wings than no 26 wing was added. Fort Salop, Jhansi Fort and Fort Milward were the three forts and three wings rotated among these.

### **Shin Kamar Operation 1975**

Shin Kamar is an important pass which connects the Tirah, Maidan area with the Khajauri plains. Shin Kamar pass is as important as the Khyber Pass which is also close by and under control of Afridis. The best part of Shin Kamar is the relative ease and the availability of water all along. It leads to Tirah and then downward to Kabul valley. Tirah is almost 6000 feet in elevation.

Under Major General Naseer Ullah Babar SJ and bar, the IGFC of NWFP it was principally decided to push the writ of government to the Durand Line. Till then the tribal area was practically a no go area for the government.

In March 1975, the Mizh Mahsud took part in Shin Kamar operation in Khyber Agency when the dispute arose over construction of Fort Salop – Shin Kamar road between the government and the Afridis. The Afridi strongly resented it and tried to prevent its construction. Ist Mahsud Scouts troops had to be deployed in Shin Kamar (a restricted area) and accomplished task assigned to them with great success. In the end road was not completely constructed rather a track was made. The next issue was the check posts

erected on the road and checking of smuggled goods. It must be kept in mind that one of the finest production of hashish is cultivated in Tirah Valley. Afridi's tribal economy is centred around hashish cultivation and further distribution all over the world or at least its sale in Bara, smuggling and transport are another two key features of Afridi life style. Thus the construction of road and subsequent check posts were not appreciated by them and they remained a bone of contention .

### **Shin Kamar Operation 1993**

On 22 February 1993, Zakha khel Afridis, who opposed the road construction from Shin Kamar to Tirah Valley and their chief Malik Nadar Khan raised a lashkar of 80-100 men including hired Afghans to stop the construction of road by force, for which they occupied strong positions in Shin Kamar, which dominated the surrounding area. To counter the hostile tribesmen, a mobile gasht of Mahsud Scouts reached Shin Kamar on 22 February 1993. The hostile lashkar opened fire on them. The troops with the concurrence of political authorities also returned fire with heavy weapons. The situation remained tense upto 04 March 1993. On 04 March 1993, Mahsud Scouts, with the help of Khyber Rifles decided to give a final blow to the hostile tribesmen and captured all their positions. After exchange of fire and physical assault dislodged the hostile tribesmen from their positions. The tribesmen suffered four deaths without any casualties on own side. Later the force returned to Fort Salop safely.

On 18 March 1993, it was reported that a lashkar consisting 100-120 men has again occupied the heights in Shin Kamar area and started firing rocket launchers, which continued till 19 March. However, after lot of efforts, the heights were cleared from the miscreants. Two tribesmen were killed on our side by miscreant's fire while troops suffered no casualty.

On 16 April 1993, lashkar consisting of 100 - 150 men again occupied the heights of Shin Kamar area. On 18 April 1993, morning, Mahsud Scouts started advance. The troops faced heavy fire. Later on, 25 Pounder guns started firing in support of the advancing troops the hostile lashkar abandoned their positions and withdrew.

In 1996 the situation again demanded interference of Mahsud Scouts. Sipah a sub tribe of Afridi also have certain territorial claims and rights in Shin Kamar. They in December 1996 took actions against known criminal Zaira Jan and Milat Khan on the Fort Salop –Shin Kamar Road. The firing continued from early morning till noon when political authorities requested Mahsud Scouts intervention, by the time own scouts arrived at the scene at 1630 hours the situation was receding. Milat Khan had died and Zaira Jan was wounded. One stolen car, one pick up and one suspect Khitab Gul was arrested.

These are not the last words about Shin Kamar as from new millennium onwards a new kind of terrorism dawn on the valley.

### **1980-2000**

In early sixties and till late seventies a tourist boom was encountered. People from all sphere of life would travel to Landi Kotal onwards to Kabul to watch Indian Movies. Landi kotal itself became a den of all kind of devilish activities. Pornography was common so was the hashish. Bara Market was centre of attraction for the people coming from down country for shopping. Soap, cloth, tobacco, perfumes , weapons and so on. It will not be out of proportion to write that no marriage was complete till the dowry is not purchased from Bara was a common theme then.

Afridi tribe became the richest tribe among all other pathan tribes and unfortunately all this wealth was centered around activities which put them into international limelight. In mid eighties the Heroin was introduced in the country so was Kalashnikov both now synonymous with Afghan Jihad of 1979-1989. Haji Ayub Afridi an ex khasadar who shot to fame in 1946 when he had fired a shot on the Nehru who later became prime minister of India while he was touring and addressing the frontier province. Ayub Afridi was the uncrowned king of Heroin smuggling, production and marketing; thus for these twenty years a regular flow of baramptas were conducted against mischievous clans. Regular internal security duties in connection with Muharram was another constant charter of duty. Sports, training and ceremonial aspects were major shades of life at Mahsud scouts. Water shortage at Fort Salop was a matter of concern and in 1981 the boring of another tube well was carried out.

Independence Day celebrations were always colourful. Starting with Namaz Shukrana at 0700 prayers at all three forts , Salop, Jhansi and Milward, at 0800 hours address of commandant and at 0900 hours hoisting of flag and singing of national anthem. In the evening at 1700 hours a friendly match of either basketball or volleyball between the officers and JCOs the bara khana at 1930 hours and then a variety programme would finish the day in befitting manner.

In November 1981 a Brampta was carried out by Mahsud scouts under command Lieutenant Colonel Shah Dad khan with two companies of Mahsud scouts and two companies of Khyber Rifles in Dara Adam Khel ; eight persons were apprehended including much wanted Laiq Shah.

In 1982 an effort was made to name the wings after the heroes of 1971 War thus No.25 Wing became Mujeeb Wing, No.26 Wing was known as Wali Wing. However this did not last and old numbering of wings was resorted. Summer training of the corps was carried out with 27 Brigade which was stationed at Landi Kotal. On 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1982 Major General Muhammad Afzal IGFC inaugurated the gate ceremony of Fort Salop. It was the efforts of Lt Col Shah Dad khan who had given the charge of Mahsud Scouts to Lt Col Fazli Moeed SJ a month before the ceremony. In August 1982 the field battery was permanently transferred to Mohmand rifles including 3.7 inch howitzer. In the same time period construction of a workshop was undergoing at Jhansi.

Sports were the main attraction with teams going all over the Pakistan to take part in various competitions the inter company competitions were held and conducted at wing level then inter wing competitions and finally the inter corps matches as part of FC Week. Para teams were taking part in the meet on regular basis. It was in 1983 that MS won the coveted basketball trophy by beating KM at Parachinar by 53-45 points. In the inter wing declamation contest Sepoy Muhammad Ishaq stood first, Naik Imtiaz Ali of this corps stood second in inter corps declamation contest in 1983. 26 wing has the distinction of lifting the inter wing firing competition for the year 1983, in the same year the corps under Captain Qamar Ul Islam won the most coveted trophy of inter corps firing competition at Parachinar, so did the mortar platoon which also won the trophy.

Raising of third wing was carried out on 20 February 1986 and was given the serial number of No.27 Wing. It was in April 1986 that Besai feature was permanently occupied, eight platoons were initially employed and deployed.

### **Bara Operation 1987**

The first serious encounter took place in January 1987 when a tribal jirga of over 3000 lashkiris comprising of Afridis confronted Mahsud scouts near Sheekhan, resultantly three maliks were killed in the shoot out and many other were wounded. By 22<sup>nd</sup> January a tactical headquarter was established at Bara and reinforcement from army in the shape of 22 Cavalry was called upon. Lieutenant colonel Abdul Jamil commandant MS was the over all commander of the operation, additional wing from KR was also called in as reinforcement, a contingent from Thall Scouts also arrived on the scene on 23 January. It was only in the first week of March that the tactical headquarters was removed after the situation was brought under control. This was one rare occurrence otherwise the environment remained cordial. Afridi tribe has been a peaceful tribe and almost all its clans especially bordering the Peshawar like Malik Din Khel are realistic in mindset , preferring their economical outlook above everything else.

Gilgit 1988 was a sad tenure for the Mahsud Scouts, they had gone there in June in connection with sectarian riots which by itself was a rare incident at Gilgit till then. One scout Sepoy Mir Wali Mahsud of No.26 Wing was drowned in Gilgit River. The contingent remained there for another a year .

1988 however will be remembered for the fabulous performance of various sports teams. For the first time the inter corps championship was being held at Fort Salop's own basketball courts. Previously Mahsud Scouts used to organise such like events at Qayyum Stadium Peshawar. Mahsud Scouts won the basketball trophy beating Chitral Scouts on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1988. A month later Mahsud Scouts was host to inter Civil armed forces basket ball championship which was won by FC NWFP.

1988 elections again saw the Mizh Mahsud spread all over the province for the internal security duties. They were deployed at Abbottabad, Chilas, Manshehra, Shinkari to name few.

***Mahsud Scouts in Sind.*** From February 1992 onwards Mahsud scouts were deployed in interior and urban Sindh. No.3 Wing was deployed at Moro to operate against the dacoits , they joined back in Khajauri Plains in September 1994. The frequency of brambtas increased from once a quarter, it was now every month and then becoming every week, number of gasht were also increased.. For instance in June 1992 one Brampta was carried out in general area Bara under command Captain Muddassar Bilal along with 58 scouts. Dacoit Khan Haider son of Bahadur Shalobar Kambar Khel was able to outwit the scouts but his brother Sher Haider and one other Ghulab Khan of same tribe were apprehended and handed over to political administration. Another such Brampta was carried out in Fort Milward area in connection with kidnapping of a air force officer but nothing was found.

An unfortunate incident occurred in January 1994, on 25<sup>th</sup> January a procession of students along with elders stormed pass the Bara Bazar and threw stones on Mahsud Scouts posts, later incident of firing also started in which one student was killed. On 27<sup>th</sup> January a mobile gasht of 72 led by officers passed through Bara. It was after a week of negotiations that matter was resolved. It was again in 2000 onwards when similar unrest was caused by the students in Bara.

**Bajaur Operations of 1994.** Summer again found Mahsud Scouts moving back and forth . Two companies along with three officers and 202 other ranks including seven JCOs left Fort Salop on 21 July 1994, they were back to fort Salop on 28<sup>th</sup> July. One wing was deployed at Daggar and this wing moved to Bajaur agency on 10<sup>th</sup> October v1994, later another wing comprising of 450 men also moved into the area on 10<sup>th</sup> November, Major Akhtar Mahmood was the commander of the force. There were few wounded casualties but they all were discharged after a fortnight. There was one incident of particular



interest as it was the first such occasion in Mahsud Scouts. On 21<sup>st</sup> October 1994 Naik Miraj Ali Orakzai of 3Wing was shot dead by Sepoy Javed Hussain Orakzai. There have been instances of soldiers deserting the Mahsud Scouts running away with their weapons, there were two such incidents in the eighties.

Opening act of 1995 was the Mahsud Scouts led by Commandant Lt Col Sikander Ilyas Lodhi carried out a raid on Ilam Guddar factories on the night of 28/29 January and recovered approximately 3000 maund of charas, opium and heroin and also apprehended nineteen notorious anti social elements without any loss. Another major incident related to these seizures was an attack on the Mahsud Scouts convoy in July 1995 in which major Sana Ullah was wounded along with Naib Subedar Muhammad Riaz and Havildar Haider Ali of AC Squadron. The end result of the skirmish was the establishing of posts by the Mahsud scouts at Shin Kamar, Milaward, Besai -1 and 2. Two officers of Mahsud scouts were kidnapped by the locals in August, Captain Wisal Muhammad and Captain Mohsin Ali both were released after a day without any harm.

The Afridi's are very keen as far as the compensation is concerned, irony of fate is that drivers of Frontier corps are bit dare devil in these stony tracks. Killing of a lamb or even hen under the wheels of mahsud scouts can arise a huge hue and cry calling for jirgas also as last resort, the main aim is to fetch as much price as possible. Thus a lamb of average value can fetch almost four times to his owner by dying down under the wheels of Mahsud Scouts.

On 27<sup>th</sup> October 1994 a boy of Aka Khel Afridi came under the vehicle of Mahsud scouts, luckily he was only hurt, he was taken by the Mahsud Scouts to the Peshawar hospital and while they were coming back the road was blocked and the scouts vehicle was forcefully snatched away. It was returned later on. There were a host of kidnapping in the area for ransom and as such many brampas were carried out. Commissioner income tax was kidnapped and later was shot dead and his body was abandoned in the area, it took place in September 1996. Consequently no less than two dozen houses were demolished in various localities. Another big seizure was carried out in September when 1125 kilograms of hashish, four kilograms of opium and bottles of liquor were recovered.

1997 initial days were full of Bramptas, in February no less than eight brampas were conducted on a single week i.e., 18<sup>th</sup>- 25<sup>th</sup> February. Rest of 1997 was practically spent in carrying out brampas which were meant to cleanse the area of unwanted persons and purify the environments free of drugs., both were daunting tasks in Afridi domain. These operations were carried out among all clans of Afridi, In august a Brampta was carried out in Malik Din Khel area, a day earlier similar operation was carried out in Sipah area.

### **Tree of Discord**

In 1989 when the present expansion of the fort was undertaken by the Subedar Major Khial Afridi, a wall was built around the fort, however on the road end which leads to Shin Kamar the gate of the fort was just on the edge with family quarters and playing fields across the road. There was a tree close to the family quarters which was an obstruction to the drivers and every now and then its bushes would damage the wind screen. Commandant ordered its cutting down, as the scouts gathered around for its cutting the local started gathering and by evening it became a political affair with local strongly rejecting its cutting as it was on their lands. The operation was postponed and similar efforts were made

by all subsequent commandants but tree remained defiant. It was finally in 2010 that when the wall was built around the fort only then it was cut down , it was not used for any purpose rather the trunk is lying in the open, lest the owner comes back and ask for the property.

### **Last days of Millennium**

The last major Brampta of 1999 ended in the death of Sepoy Hussain Khan Shilmani and sepoy Khobiya Khan was injured. Brampta was carried out on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1999, to apprehend notorious outlaw Bahadur Khan. The force was led by Major Naseem along with Captain Sanaullah and Shahid Khan. The outlaw house was cordoned but intensive fire from the house kept the force at bay till these two valiant scouts stalked forward and shoot the Bahadur Khan, in the process Shilmani died on the spot due to wounds and Khobiya Khan survived. Both were recommended for Sitara i Basalat.

In November 1999 the over all command structure of all Frontier corps was elevated thus now a Colonel became the commandant with lieutenant colonels as wing commanders. Colonel Zakir Hussain was the first commandant in such capacity.

### **2000-2008**

World underwent a transition after 9/11 and its effects were felt all over the globe but Pakistan was the most affected country and region. Borders with Afghanistan were sealed and Taliban were restricted in movement. A war against militancy that started in 2002 is still going on in the tribal area.

Within Bara Valley or Khajauri Plains or more precisely within the area of operations of Mahsud scouts the heat of war was felt from 2008 onwards. Initially the focus of counter insurgency remained in south Waziristan and slowly it spread upward engulfing North Waziristan and then into Swat valley and it was in 2009 that operation against Afridi was initiated. In terms of tribes the Mahsuds bore the brunt of this militancy followed by Wazir. Different splinter groups emerged some were loyal to the government and other were not. This was the first and major insurgency that took place along the Western frontiers since 1919 .

### **Mizh Mahsud 2000-2007**

Life in Mahsud Scouts was not affected much by the war against terror, there are many facets of this aspect. Historically very seldom the whole of Patahn tribes have risen together, last it happened was in 1898 with tirah uprising. Frontier Corps as a whole took it in stride and gave an composed outlook. There were regular and planned competitions in sports, qirat, declamation, firing, band, and annual week was the Wimbeldon of the year. All corps commanders alongwith subeadr majors and representatives of all qaums would gather at all the corps headquarters honoured by President of Pakistan or Prime Minister or Chief of army, navy or airforce, governor , IGFC, and son on. Mahsud scouts had a wonderful time, its teams and fireres brought laurels after the laurels , they wee almost unbeatable at fort salop in any competition including band.

Their most signifacnt contribution was the Mahsud army Public school which was opened on 20<sup>th</sup> april 2000 by IGFC Major General Taj Ul haq and Commandant zakir hussain. In October 2003 Qirat competition was held at Landi Kotal, Mahsud scouts naib Khateeb Shah Hussain obtained eight position; very next year competition was held at DFort Salop in February and Mahsud Scouts were adguded

second in Hifz and third in Qirat, week later firing team in inter unit firing competition held at Thall stood seventyh. Mizh mahsud stood second in the orienteering competition held at landi Kotal on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2003.

Mahsud scouts performed well in the courses too, lance naik Ali Marjan Afridi stood second in FC course of 82mm Mortar. In the religious teachers declamation contest also held at Fort salop in august 2004 , Naib Khateeb Muhammad Khan stood first with tochi Scouts second and Chitral Scouts third.

Haiti , naik mBakht Wali Khattak, Naik Hayat Khan Yousafzai and Lance Naik Fida Muhammad have the distinction of being the pioneers a,omg Mahsud scouts they are the very first to serve overseas with UNO at Haiti Police, they departed on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2004. In 2007 the last year of paece in the valley , Basketball championship was organised at Landi Kotal the Mahsud scouts stood second. Football championship was held at Parachinar in June, Mahsud scouts lost all matches and stood 12<sup>th</sup>.

PAF trainer aircraft carshed at Murad Talab on 8<sup>th</sup> june botyh pilots vejected safely and Mahsud scouts cpordoned the area.

Change of command. Colonel Mahmood raza was reverted to aremy after completing his teniure of command and he was taken over by Colonel Mujahid Hussain a gunner on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2007.

First wavec of trouble in Bara started in april with the studenst demonstration and razing of Managl bagh;s hoiuase however real trouble in Bara Valley started on **1<sup>st</sup> September 2007** when the Taliban announced their arrival in the valley by carrying out blast and dropping written warning. After forty eight hours the conspiracy was cleared when the real culprits belonging to Badr Mujaheeden and Jaish Muhammdi were arrested who confessed of the blast; they were picked up by the Mangal Bagh men and tried them. By this act Mangal Bagh or lashkar i islami took the notion of victory , it was very similar to the killing of Kirri group in Miranshah by Taliban in December 2005.

From this point onwards Lashkar i Islami men started roaming inside the Bara bazaar carrying weapons and khassadars just turned their eyes other way around. Mangal Bagh showed his force on 11<sup>th</sup> September by entering the bazaar from Shalobar Chowk and exiting Alhaj Market in a procession of foty vehicles all armed to teeth.

### **Nari Qarwal Post.**

This post is a classic example of frontier warfare and how it differs from the standard warfare or conventional warfare. The post was established in June after the clashes of Namdar and Zareef group, now Namdar group had the reservation about the location of post as due to its height it in their opinion violates their purdah, flexibility is the key word in frontier warfare, in the end the political administration carried out a meeting with elders, on the site inspection was carried out and in the end very amicably the post was adjusted as per the satisfaction of the tribes and hostilities renewed. On 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2007 Namdar group lost four of its men where as Zareef had one dead in the battle of ego.

Arrival of tanks at Fort Salop, it was 23 September 2007 at 1545 hours when the three tanks arrived at Fort Salop from armoured corps centre, it has been after the years that tanks have arrived at Fort Salop, they certainly imposed themselves. Later in the time the tanks crossed Shin Kamar Pass as well , first time in the history of the area that tanks have crossed Shin Kamar pass.

Lashkar i Islam had an eye ball contact with Mahsud Scouts who stopped them entering into Bara Bazar with weapons. Lashkar grudgingly complied with instruction but showed its side by checking the people for not wearing cap. ‘ Ghunads of Lashkar i Islam have started taking law into their ahnds and political administration is taking it lightly, it is recommended that our troops be allowed to shoot if the ghundaas repeat such like incidents’.<sup>6</sup> Mahsud Scouts further increased its strength by placing additional scouts at Minara.

Political administration on the other hand had a feather in the cap when both Kuki Khel and Qambar Khel tribes agreed on the construction of Levies training centre at Bara, the agreement was reached at Khyber house Peshawar on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2007. There are factions among the Afridi tribe and each faction is realistic in nature and looks after own interest first. Afridis did not allowed the Taliban to disrupt their trade route passing through the Afridi land; it is something different if a faction among themselves starts playing with fire even then the Kuki Khel kept Managl Bagh away from their area.

**Death of an apotheosis'** . There was a man called Shirin Khan among the Qambar Khel who often used to claim himself to be a prophet, he was mentally sick and as such was given the benefit of doubt by the jirga, however on 18<sup>th</sup> September at noon the Qambar Khel men gathered around Sheeren's house and after fifteen minutes of wait started indiscriminate firing and later went satisfied.

### **Fort Salop.**

It is the home of Mahsud Scouts, they occupied it in 1961 but the fort has a history of its own. It was constructed in 1930 as a result of Khajauri Operations.

Fort Salop today is the headquarters of the Mahsud Scouts, Fort did not had any outer boundary wall, almost all the forts constructed in Khajauri Plains by the British did not had any outer boundary, it was in 2010 that Colonel Naseer Janjua the commandant initiated the project and completed within his tenure a remarkable feat indeed, it is worth mentioning that Colonel Janjua has a reputation of building walls around the Forts he did it at Boya where he was commanding a wing in Tochi Scouts. The present office block which stands majestically in the heart of the Fort Salopt was also completed by him.

Fort today covers an area of 10 acres with a twenty feet bricked wall all around having sentry towers at regular intervals, the water source is well, initially there was only one well but now two wells cater for the water requirement, there is electricity with generators as stand by. The complete construction of the fort which excluding the main office block and new medical inspection room dates back to early days; it consist of tin roof huts and long elongated barracks, the roof is invariably painted in red colour. In last five years it has gone through major renovation which are still underway. The current project is to construct the bunkers for the troops and already three such bunkers have been completed by colonel Naeem Sarwar since taking over command in mid January 2013

Fort has a main gate which is a new one due to construction of wall, after a distance of 500 meters stands the old and original building, it had a wall which were removed or pulled down in post 1947. Inside the fort the troops residential area is on the east where as the office blocks stands in centre with officers mess and officers residence including commandant house adjacent. A central small park with a miniature lake, Birds cages adoring it.

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<sup>6</sup> War diary. Specxial sitrep No. 150/13/x/G at 5.10.07

On the outer perimeter the artillery, armour and signals occupy the main grounds with sentries posted on the posts round the clock. In recent years Fort has been receiving mortars from the Afridis on regular basis. There are six families of troops and three families of officers residing inside the fort.

It receives fresh ration on every Wednesday, pay is collected on the first of every month from Peshawar and brought back to fort under heavy guard, pay day is a happy day. The area is generally level with a very gradual slope. There are few old trees still left despite almost eighty years of living, the two oldest trees flank the office block on south. By and large soil is tough, water shortage has not helped in putting forward an orchard worth mentioning and neither there is any crop however small kitchen gardens still add colour to the dinning tables of officers and other ranks. The lambs issued as part of fresh ration are a regular sight, they move in herd and spend the days nibbling on what ever grass is available.

### **Sheen Kamar**

On Wednesday I went to Sheen Kamar which means *green* mountains, it was not planned to visit it not planned to visit today but then Major Imran informed me in the morning that the trip is planned. Myself and Captain Ehtisham along with an escort. The Fort Salop controls the route as it is constructed on the eastern descent of the Pass. This pass is as important as the Khyber Pass it is inhabited by the Zia Khel tribe of Afridis. We drove out, it was sunny and warm. The very first village outside the fort is deserted now. The original road used to pass along the boundary of the fort similar to Boya Fort in North Waziristan.

The road is a constant climb but it is gradual, on our right the branch of Bara River flows mostly dry with only a silver lining of water, the village of Besai is located on a high plateau with houses well spread, having plenty of tree. As one climbs up through winding road one comes across instances of it being blown up by the miscreants which in this case is Mangal Bagh.

Mangal Bagh is the war lord of the area couple of years ago he was a conductor on the Bar-Peshawar bus and according to the commandant has made money through selling of hashish.

After twenty odd minutes of drive the Sheen Kamar Pass is arrived, it is a narrow pass where in 2000 the project of constructing the road linking the area with Tirah was inaugurated and completed after two years. It is not a marvel of engineering feat but a mark of political acumen. The Afridi tribe is known for its commercial acumen and many a times the various factions have split among themselves chiefly on the issue of having more share in the trade. I met Lieutenant colonel Faisal of Swat Scouts, he was waiting with his junior commissioned officers at the pass. I feel bit embarrass in having being given this honour it speaks of the officers. Faisal has joined directly from Lahore where he was commanding the Guides cavalry. What a shock it must be to him to come from such an illustrious regiment to become part of Swat Scouts. He did not showed any resentment. Very courteous and polite officer who seems to be learning the ropes of the area. We drove forward now the area on our left was open green wide valley and on our right it was a mountainous range. Soon we reached the turn from where one track leads to the right the old pass if one can call it. We pass through another village and reach the last post of Swat Scouts where two tanks were parked in awkward position. Tanks are being used here in direct firing role. Our next and last stop was the village defence committee post.

It looked like any Taliban post, there was one sentry carrying a Kalashnikov and standing tall and proud on a fortified bunker, another young man was giving the sentry duty in the cover of an olive tree and another one bit far looking at the approaches from Tirah. There is only one way and that is the road through which vehicles can move although any one can come down from the adjoining hill which is on the right of the road. My interest in these men was to see how these natives fight and live, it is purely luck that these are now enemy of Managl Bagh whom they lovingly call Mangli. The only reason that these men have turned against him is due to the fact that Mangal is from Sepah tribe a sub caste of Afridi where as these men are from Zia Din Khel sub tribe of Afridi's. This is the art of frontier warfare and this is where the political agent comes in handy by dividing the tribes. These sub tribes are more concerned about their own interests than looking after the ideological values of Managl Bagh.

The interesting feature about these **village defence committee** is that they are the true and classic militia which Machiavelli was so profoundly fond of and propagated. The English Militia of 17<sup>th</sup> Century is another example of these militia; the natives taking care of the town and villages against the miscreants. English militia was paid and fed upon public tax which was levied for the occasion and purpose. Here at **Sheen Kamar** pass these men of Zakha Khel tribe are fed by the Mahsud Scouts or the political agent indeed. The weapons or more precisely the ammunition is provided by the Mahsud Scouts on behalf of political agent; this is how the Frontier Corps took birth. The Turi Militia of Kurram Valley was the very first example among pathan otherwise Colonel Durand had raised Gilgit Scouts in 1889.

We bid them farewell after embracing each other which is the custom as well you cannot enter or leave a post without shaking or embracing each other it may be just touching but it has to be done. On our way back the valley was now on our right, in front the Bara Valley lush green. This greenery here is deceptive because these are not fruit trees rather shrubs, there is one particular shrub known as gurgoray which has small fruit and is eaten. This route connects Tirah with Bara valley and is much pleasant than the Khyber Pass, its only limitation is its rather bit of extent as compare to Khyber which I have not seen yet.

There was an old grave yard next to Zaka Khel post across the track, I was narrated by one of the tribesman as being an old graveyard which was told to them by their grandfathers. We stopped by at one oasis like place to see the caves, after walking through the bushy track led by the Mahsud Scouts we entered the mouth of a cave and then I followed the others, it was dark and cool. The light of mobile phone was not enough to guide but I managed it and followed other, through a labyrinth of turns we all reach at the end which was a circular flat mud end. The height was good enough even for me to walk straight and erect. We made our exit through another way and suddenly found ourselves on a open patch with trees around. These caves are man made they are all around, they are in villages along the way. They were and are used to keep the animals inside in winter and also the humans. Their defensive value is beyond words to explain. In old times and still the tribes in time of war especially the women and children can take refugee here and so can the militia.

## Tuesday.

I woke up at 0730 hours rather the waiter came to wake me up. The room where I am staying has an attached room as well and the person came out of the room thus I was bit at loss whether he is an officer who is living next door or an attendant; it is difficult to judge when all are wearing kameez shalwar and that too early in the morning. It was a bright sunny day, I ordered a cup of tea which was not good somehow the other it is difficult to find a decent cup of tea everywhere. Major Imran who is

performing the duty of DQ was my guide and we had to go to Fort Jhansi first and then to the Fort Miliward and back. It looks simple but last night I had a second thought on the whole trip. There is a cease fire with the Taliban and everyone seems to be bit relaxed but I am a firm believer and so are many others who regard these cease fires and agreements as a lull before the storm, none knows when the hell is going to break out but everyone consoles other with these words of peace.

I am still not very much clear about the direction of north, it is only after ascertaining the north that one can make a relationship between geography and history. We left the fort in a hilux with another hilux having our escort. In the vehicle I sat behind with Major Imran and on an ambush laid on us and the reaction of the scout; not a very good feeling. The main reason is the easy attitude of everyone here and secondly it seems almost impossible to stop an suicide attack or ambush, both rare in this area as compared to north Waziristan. We passed Shaaks Fort, area is green with plenty of shrubs 'keekar' but not of plantation or crops. Initially the passage out from fort passes through a culvert, then burnt out and destroyed shops a sharp bend, another destroyed culvert and drive straight then comes the small town of Qambar Khel. It is not like a typical frontier town rather an urban outskirts of Peshawar. Wall chalking regarding the election{it is due today on NA 4 I believe} it has been postponed in the initial 11 May elections. The moment I saw few women clad in burqa walking in the stony causeway I felt relax. Their walking and presence outside is an assuring sign of peace and modern enlightenment of the area. There were school boys all clad in white dress although in Frontier they wear militia colour; could be a private school. I am not wrong if I write that I have seen maximum wall chalking in FATA regarding the private schools. Males were sitting idle on the roadside probably waiting for polling but it could be custom or habit also, none was carrying any kind of arms

### **Fort Jhansi & Fort Milward**

These two forts are other two major forts in the area, first one is in fact Fort Shakas which is a rather new construction it was handed over to FC in 1982. Fort Jhansi comes first, its crow distance from Salop is not more than four kilometers but as the area is infested with mines/IED and ambush sites thus a long detour is forced upon. The road is now a track with often blown up culverts and almost all houses are demolished partially or complete. The area around belongs to Malik Din Khel clan, they are more business like and have soft attitude towards the FC. For Jhansi one has to pass astride the road running parallel with Hayatabad but on one side is the settled area and other side is free tribal area.

**Bara Bazar** the hub of Mangal Bagh is now deserted like a ghost town, there are over 7500 shops in the two miles stretch of road all dealing with hashish and weapons. These markets have been occupied by the Khyber Wing of Khyber Rifles under command of Mahsud scouts. The shops have their wares intact, they have fabulous rooms upstairs with woodwork and carpets. From Bara we drove past Dogra which is an army unit headquarters, the track is in dirt with bushes all around, needless to say that no defence against IED is possible in such terrain, other than jammers but you cannot do much about a pressure mine. At Dogra which used to be a Sikh outpost is now a complex of three factories owned by Haji Ayub Afridi who himself died couple of years ago.

**Jhansi** is on the bank of Bara River, an old post constructed in 1928, it looks after the area which is plain. There is no wall around the fort, there is a squadron of armour, battery of artillery and so on. Construction is all barracks and plenty of them are here. Two years ago it came under an fire attack from Mangal Bagh men. It has a beautiful Chinaar garden as well which was constructed in 1980 by the wing

commanders. All along there was noise of jets flying over head. Conversation revolves around the activities of the miscreants, morale high.

Fort Milward is the last of the forts on the southern edge of the valley, there are two more forts like Kishengarh but it is not under Frontier Corps. Milward had a worst scenario when nine scouts including the wing commander were killed in an ambush.

**Fort Milward** remained with FSF till 1976 then it was handed over to FC. Fort is not that big but it have open spaces with Bara River branch running on the southern edge, There are Kiker Trees all around with very little space for irrigation. I had a briefing at Milward and also the lunch. Most of buildings have been repaired and altered but still a vast number of original hutments. Families of troops six-ten lives in every fort and face the same music as the men are facing. Light is rare but there are generators and their use is quite liberal.

### **Operation Sirat –e- Mustaqeem**

On 28<sup>th</sup> June 2008 much awaited operation against Magal bagh started under code name Sirat-e-Mustaqee. One troop of tanks ex 21 Hoirse, own tank and two APC aapart from bomb disposal parties estabvlshed road block on Bara – Tirah road, first objective was to capture the Gandhao Post from miscreants. Commandant Colonel Mujahid Jussain led the operation. Post oitself was vacant but surrounding heights were occupied. The suspected bunkers were destroyed through tank fire; this resultantly compelled the miscreants to move into the Tirah Valley, one miscreant was killed. Mangal bagh ow3n house was also demolished using explosives, Kohi Markaz was partially damaged at 1830 hours and force came back to Fort salop . Curfew was imposed in the Bara sub division for the day. One wing of tochi scouts was also present at Fort salop.

On 29<sup>th</sup> June at 1340 hours the ansar Islam lashkar markaz was also demolished. On the same ady while coming abck the private jail of Mangal bagh at Kohi was also demolished, it was reported by the locals abouts its presence and location.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July Ilm Guddar was the target, one kidnapped person Gul Miran Kuki Khel was released from the bondage, three abductees were also caught. Pir House was under the control of Managl Bagh , it was also freed after a heavy shoot out in which four miscreants later surrendered to the Mahsud scouts. On 2<sup>nd</sup> July , Bara area was combed and sanitised, patrolling was carried out through Kohi,Mandi Kas, Dogras, spin Qabar and back to Fort Salop, eleven persons belonging to Mangal Bagh group were arrested along with eight SMG and two 9mm rifles.

### **Mahsud Ambushed**

**8<sup>th</sup> July 2008** in real sense brought the war to the Mahsud Scouts, one vehicle was coming from Hayatabad to Fort Milward in relation with an administration duty of Dairy Farm. One kilometre short of the Fort Milward, both single cabin vehicles, one carrying milk and other as the escort came under fire, area is thick with growth providing ample opportunities for any killing party. After fifteen minutes of firing four scouts of Mahsud had embraced shahadat and other eight were injured. Naik Abdul Rehman Bhattani, Naik Rehmat Ullah Mahsud, Sweeper Manzoor and lance Naik Muhammad Zahoor Shilmani were among the dead. Surprisingly only two SMG and one Rifle G-3 were missing; it was all they were carrying.



By end August all additional troops were deinducted from the Shakas, . Haji Namdar group took on the Taliban head on , they carried out an ambush on 20<sup>th</sup> august 2008 killing three persons of Tehreek Taliban Pakistan {TTP} and one was injured. On the same five more persons of TTP wre kidnapped by Haji Namdar group.

### **September 2009**

Month of September began with miscreants attack on fort Milward, they attacked with mortars and RPG-7 but they landed short of gun positions. On 11<sup>th</sup> September three more guns of 130mm m calibre reached Fort Milward from Jamrud. Mangal bagh alaso kidnapped one Tandal of mahsud scouts, rahat Gul afridi who was kidnapped by Mangal bagh group but later released on the intervention of political administration, it was a case of misunderstanding. In another similar acsse Subedar Daulat Khan was coming with his family when he was taken away on gun point , his family was left unhurt. In retaliation Mahsud scouts in next two adys arrested no less than twelve persons belonging to the Mangal Bagh group. On 22 September in an abortive ambush laid by Mangal Bagh the scouts retaliated and resultantly four miscreants were killed.

### **December 2008. Operation Daralam**

In mid December the local population took out a procession for the supply of electricity however it was the dying days of thge year when the operation DarAlam was put into action on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2008. The force comprising of one company of 3 Sind regiment, company of Mahsud scouts, platoon of SOG, Troop of tanks from independent armoured corps squadron{IACS} and bomb disposal team , air was on call thus an air contact team was also taken along; Commnadant mahsud scouts led the force. At 1100 hours Cobra gunship helicopters were called in which soften up the target at Qadwar Killi, nine rounds of tanks and 11 mortar bombs also punished the target area, 10 AK regiment's battalion mortars were also in support. Target was nothing but a compound comprising of three mud houses belonging to Saifur and Adamjee, all in all seventeen persons belonging to various tribes were arrested.

On last day of year , the force left Fort Shakas at 0900 hours and cordoned houses in Sher Sakhi colony at 1030 hours. Over 300 houses were searched and 119 suspects were arrested. Najeeb house was the next target , Najeeb himself surrendered and his house was demolisjhed, 126 suspects were arrsted out of which there were 63 locals and 63 Afghanistan. Haji Monin was the next on line and he also surerendered alongwith six of his folloers to the force , his house was also demolished.

### **2009**

Opeartion Dar Alam continued with force agin setting out of Fort shakas under command Commandant Mahsud Scouts. Adamje House was the target which was cordoned off at 0930 hours, composition of force remained almost unchanged from the first day opoeartion. Adamjee was arrested and house demolished. Jandol's house was next to go, 502 cartons of meal ready to eat of NATO was recovered, two more houses were demolished namely that of Johar and Obaidullah both were razed to ground. Weapons were recovered but they wee neither modern nor deadly in nature , one 8mm rifle, one 7mm rifle and couple of hundred of rounds.Alamdar's house was the last to be demolished on the very first day of year . all in all 143 suspects were arrested.

2<sup>nd</sup> January was no different from other days as force set out from Fort shakas at 0700 hours, Wazir Dand market in Jamrud was cordoned, 50 odd shops were demolished with excavator. Another operation was carried out at hayat Khan Serai at 0900 hours, force then moved towards Kharkhano where two markets were demolished and at 1100 hours house of Zalmai was demolished. Most of the items recovered were of commercial value like Wine bottles {63 in number} hasish packets{35} opium seven packets, heroin half kilogram , few odd weapons and fake currency all trade marks of afridi enterprise. On 3<sup>rd</sup> January , wall chalking of different groups was removed by a force undercommand Lt Col Asif.

The big catch was found on 4<sup>th</sup> January , Jalat Khan's house was searched and explosive laden vehicle and suicide kjackets were found. Peartion continued into second week of January as well with search of houses and their demolishing creating a favourable impact among the local population , slowly but gradually the area was being cleared of anti social elements and miscreants. Majority of the suspects were mainly anti social elements very few were miscreants in true sense. Uptill 10<sup>th</sup> January more than 200 suspects were arrested, in the process many kidnapes were recovered and equal number of kidnappers were arrested, stolen cars were also handed over to the political administration. One Saudi national Zaibi-ul-taifa was also arrested in one of the saerch operation carried out on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2009. One side effect of these operations was the breaking down of taliban's administrative support, all their supportsw were being atken to the atsk, workshops where the miscraenst were getting their vehicles repaired were closed down and mechanics arrested.

By end March the operation was called off after desired results were achieved. Biggest cache of arms were recovered from Haji Market in alam Guddar area, Wahid and Saifoor two most wanted criminal houses ewere demolished, 31 suspects were arrested, weapons confiscated included 75mm RR, RPG-7 , 12.7mm gun, 82mm Mortar to name few. Narcotics factories at Alam Guddar were also arided in the last week of March where 80 kilograms of hasish was confiscated from one house. The over all catch was 50 tons of hasish. By last week of March the focus was shifted towards the aka Khel area.

### **Dr Khan Kidnapped**

An operation was launched in the first week of May 2009. It started after the frontier Constabukary bus was hit on 7<sup>th</sup> May with an IED cnear the Kohat Tunnel resultantly three constabulary men were injured. On 11<sup>th</sup> May an suicide attack was carried out against the constabuklary, one embraced shahadat and sevben othes were injured.

Dr Khan Bangash the honorary captain and subedar major of 3 Wing alongwith Sepoy Sajjad Bangash were kidnapped by miscreants while he was travelling in his own vehicle, they were travelling from Salim Podst towards Milward Fort

May also saw the conflict between the khassadars and mahsud scouts, the back ground was that on 17<sup>th</sup> May avehicle was suspicious enough to warrant checking, the occupants simply rushed towards the near by khassadar post at Sheikhon Bridge. The khassadars started protecting the men who have atken refugee inside by claiming them to be khassadars a scuffle erupted. After an hour the QRF was sent to apprehend the miscreants this QRF came under heavy fire at Bara. Later Lt col asif went inside the post but after heated discussion the khassadar subeadr simply cocked his weapon but Lt col asif boldly grabbed the weapon and arrested the Subedar. Later these khassadars were handed over to the political

administration, all khassadrs were from qambar Khel tribe. Cobras punished the Khawangi in Aka Khel area as part of Eagle Swoop operation on 30<sup>th</sup> May.

### **MI-17 Helicopter**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009 a MI-17 helicopter of Army aviation crashed in Orakzai agency. Mahsud Scouts were task to reach the crash site, Commandant alongwith QRF managed to reach the site, helicopter was completely destroyed and all passengers were burnt to death. Since the wreckage was found close to tariq afridi markaz thus it was suspected taht he has something to do in this regard. Next day an aircraft accident investifgtion team was atken to the site, a company of 4 FF was also part of this force. A Cobra provided aerial support, however when the Cobras went for refuelling the army and Mahsud scouts came undere intense fire from adjoining heights. 55 Miscreants were reported to be killed in this skirmish.<sup>7</sup>

In july miscreanst targets were shelled mainly on intelligence reports, house searches were also carried but more emphasis was laid upon checking the movement of locals and their acrs. Not much was found other than opium and hasish which was being smuggled into the settled areas. It was reported taht majority of attacks carried out in Peshawar have their base in Bara . On 12<sup>th</sup> july 2009 an operation was conducted in Bara early in the morning bat suspected palces art shinko, Qambar Khel. Air cover was provided by gunship helicopters, few houses were destroyed alongwith two vehicles. In another operation carried out on intelligence tip, house of Jan Muhammad was searched, Haviladar said habib was awarded with a captured 12 Bore shotgun for his exemplary bravery inh the operation during which seven suspects ewre arrested.

### **Nigerian Kidnapes**

On 29<sup>th</sup> july an operation was conducted in Sipah area where six Nigerian kidnapped by Mangal bagh group wre kept in a private jail, they wre released from bondage, two of the kidnappers belong to Zakha Khel tribe where as he hird was from shinwarei tribe.

Sepoy Muhammad arif afridi, embraced shahadat in one such operation, it was conducted on 6<sup>th</sup> august 2009 on a Mangal bagh group house, extensive fire was echanged, Mahsyd Scouts fired 26 rockets of RPG-7, the highest in any one operation. Arif was shot dead while he was chasing a miscreant. Another high intensity fire exchange took place on 10<sup>th</sup> august in which three scouts wre injured. This location in Qambar Khel Azarai Shalobar was kept engaged next day also employing Cobra helicopters, one company of Mahsud scouts a company of Khyber rifles, SOG-1 company and one tank took part in the operation. On 13<sup>th</sup> the Khyber rifle company was hit with an IED resultantly three scouts of Khyber rifles embraced cshahadat while four other were injured.

Mahsud scxouts aprt from thesse sting operations was also carrying ooout regular gasht in the area, mostly of two or three hours .

**14<sup>th</sup> September 2009** was another eventfull day, a search and cordon operation was carried out in Malik din Khel area, at 1400 hours the QRF moved out from Fort salop and after n hour of driving was at the site, it was the house of Taj Muhammad and asghar Khan nothing aws found thus the search operation was extended another 500 meters ahead and tis is where the tings went wrong, the fire from miscreanst

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<sup>7</sup> War diary Mahsud scouts.

took the life of Sepoy sadiq Hussain Turi and Lt Col Muhammad Kamran was hit in the shoulder with a bullet. Mahsud scouts killed four miscreants in this encounter and three were caught. Tanks fired 18 rounds, 11 RPG-7 were fired and over 700 rounds of 7.62 mm were fired apart from throwing of 15 hand grenades. A mine in the form of anti tank mine was detected in mid September in Shin Kamar area.

By the start of winter patrolling, mobile gasht and check post were erected all around the area and suspects were being caught and handed over to political administration on daily basis. Suspects were either interrogated by the intelligence set up of Frontier Corps or by the army. After intensive scrutiny the people were classified as white or black, white means that person is cleared and as such was then released from custody.

In October the Fort Salop was hit hard by the miscreants using mortar and rockets which are non precision out of ten rockets which they fired six landed inside the fort., damage was minor with only five scouts receiving splinters, one was treated by own doctor and four others were referred to CMH Peshawar.

### **31<sup>st</sup> October 2009**

A black day for Mahsud scouts, at 1145 hours the routine patrolling of the area was being conducted on a Toyota single cabin vehicle, it was a sunny day with breeze flowing, Naaib Subedar Granbadshah was sitting on the front seat, they had left Fort Salop and were heading towards the Sudur Gar area when a blast happened, it was a remote controlled IED, seven scouts embraced shahadat on the spot. There were two vehicles, the other vehicle remained unhurt and they evacuated the casualties to the Fort Salop.

In retaliation an extensive patrolling was conducted to apprehend the culprits eight persons all from Malik din Khel tribe were arrested on 6<sup>th</sup> October, one Mahsud scout Seppoy Said Nabi Jan embraced shahadat while two more suffered injuries. Meanwhile Fort Salop was also targeted by miscreants and no less than 30 shells were received within a span of an hour, however damage was not much only four scouts were injured. Ganado Post was next to be targeted a fire raid was carried out by miscreants. Same day [20<sup>th</sup> November 2009] a QRF of Khyber rifles was victim of an IED when it was proceeding to Shin Kamar for the provision of action and fresh to the scouts deployed there, one Havildar Muhammad Ashraf embraced shahadat while three others were injured. A QRF of Mahsud scouts then went to the site for evacuation, it also supplied the much needed ration to the post at Shin Kamar.

### **Khawak Ba De Sham 24<sup>th</sup> November 2009**

In November 2 Wing of Mahsud Scouts and 1 Wing of Khyber Rifles took part in the above named operation which was conducted in the valley to apprehend the miscreants behind recent surge of violence. Fire support was provided from Fort Salop in the form of 130mm and 25 pounder artillery fire. 9 NLI and 40 FF were the two infantry regiments who spearheaded the operation. Corps Commander and IGFC Major General Nadir Zeb visited the Mahsud Scouts on 2<sup>nd</sup> December

Media mob was briefed at Fort Salop on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2009, almost all media houses were present, most obnoxious was the Geo followed by Aaj and Express, most sensible was the PTV. The private media houses have only one concern and that is to make money out of a news irrespective of its authenticity.

During the operation houses were searched and sting operations carried out almost on daily basis. Last major operation was conducted on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> December 2009, ten people were held in custody, 100 kilogram of hashish was confiscated, Lewana who was the commander of of miscreants was killed in a shoot out on 29<sup>th</sup> in area Yousaf Talao.

Induction of recruits. 9<sup>th</sup> batch of recruits had their passing out at Fort Salop , 198 recruits were trained by Mahsud Scouts, out of these 65 were posted in Mahsud Scouts and 113 in Thall Scouts with remaining posted to Orakzai Scouts. Alternatively these recruits were trained at Thall and Fort Salop. 12<sup>th</sup> Batch was passed out on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2009 at Fort Salop. In 2012 the recruits were being trained within the Mahsud Scouts at Fort Salop. For specialist training the courses were being arranged at Jalozaï or Warsak under HQFC. Field Firing and battle inoculation were also carried regularly. In June 2008 it was conducted at Nowshehra ranges

A new competition in line with environment was the inter unit sniper competition which was held at Swat Scouts in February 2009, two officers, one JCO and 10 scouts participated from Mizh Mahsud and stood fourth similar results were achieved in the inter unit small arms firing competition .

Colonel Naseer Janjua an armoured corps officer who had also served in Tochi Scouts took over the command on 25<sup>th</sup> august 2009.

## **2010**

Year started with a peace for a week and then on 16<sup>th</sup> January Lt Col Sheraz of Mahsud Scouts who was recently posted to the Mahsud led an operation in Spin Qabar Khel, it was a whole ady operation in which two companies of NLI also took part, thirteen soldiers of NLI were injured to miscreant firing. Two more search and cordon operation were conducted within a week and over two dosen people were apprehended, this pattern remained in vogue in February as well. In March a deviation from standard teaching was made when on 17<sup>th</sup> , Mahsud Scouts also laid an ambush; two miscreants were injured. In April the poppy fields were destroyed in Dogra and Jhansi area. In May a joint operation with police was carried out and houses were destroyed in Jhansi first half of year was spent in area domination by patrolling and carrying out sting operation. In June an IED blast injured five scouts of Mahsud. Miscreants had little to retaliate , IEDs were blasted but luckily they did not caused much damage. Another factor was a n improved equipment, initially Mahsud Scouts did not had any detector but now bomb disposal parties were well armed wirthth latest technology and it made a visible difference.

## **Janjua Wall**

Colonel Naseer Janjua was the commandant of Mahsud Scout 2009-2011, a veteran cavalry officer who has commanded a wing in Tochi Scouts before being promoted. He had taken part in Kurram and more importantly in Swat; an officer who has been leading the scouts from front. It was Colonel Janjua who undertook the gigantic task of erecting a boundary wall around the Fort Salop which in true sense gives the feeling of fort and has enhanced the area and security of the Mahsud scouts to a level which is unprecedented since 1930 when the Fort Salop was constructed.

The length of wall is 8125 feet having a width varying between 18 inches to 27 inches, its height at point is around twenty feet although at points it is twelve feet. Piquets numbering a dozen have been constructed at cardinal points all along the wall and covers all around. These piquets have sleeping area and washrooms adjacent. The piquets itself are spacious having size of 14 feet by 14 feet with an width of 27 feet. It is pucca brick wall , no less than 2.7 million bricks were used, these bricks were brought from Peshawar and daily almost four to six truck loads of brick was brought to fort. Fort Salop has serious shortage of water thus the construction of wall is commendable. 11700 cement bags were used ,21892 kilograms of T-iron has been incorporated in the wall to give it strength. 27 civilian masons were employed for the construction , the project started in January 2010 and was completed by January next year. Major Muhammad Amir was the project officer, Major Shoaib was the quarter master of the scouts and as such directly supervising the wall, Subedar {later Subedar Major} Abdul Waheed Bangash was the project JCO and Naik Azmat Bangash was the project NCO, Corps Subedar major Khalid Usman Khattak was another pivotal figure. Above all it was the driving force and personality of the Colonel Janjua which made all this possible. There were many stages in the construction which needs elaboration. The wall runs along the bed of the stream and during the flash floods of 2011 a portion of wall suddenly collapsed. Battalion Havildar Major Havildar Akbar Mahsud recalls ‘ there were six or seven scouts working at the time and i rushed to the spot, although all were safe yet i was not mentally at peace<sup>4</sup> and it was only after carrying out a physical count of the scouts in the fort did i had a sigh of relief’. Now the wall has been altered in a way to let the water pass by.

This was the first major construction work undertaken by the Mahsud scouts in last thirty years and the wall is testimony to the fact that the skills of Mahsuds are unmatched even today as far as the construction is concerned, let it not be forgotten that it was the construction for which Mahsud battalions were raised. It was a time of great achievement, the insurgency was getting off the ground in Bara Valley and as such the wall came very handy when the full weight of military was thrust in the valley and the miscreants retaliated, wall proved to be insurmountable . Above all wall created a sense of achievement and a bondage among the Mahsud scouts. Their living for a year centred around this wall, all night work remained in progress, extra tea and edibles were prepared, officers took part with the scouts, Colonel Janjua practically breathed the wall till its completion.

In last thirteen years no other wall can match the grace, length and magnitude of this wall which was constructed under hostile environment. Today it stands a symbol of state’s authority . wall cost 1,89,96,570 rupees. It was constructed by the Mahsud Scouts , no civilian labour other than the masons were employed.

**October Blast.** On 20<sup>th</sup> October 2010, an IED blast near Sur garh took the lives of Naik Altaf Khattak, Sepoy Ansar Khan Afridi and Sepoy Nawaz Orakzai, three other scouts were injured as well. In another accident which took place on 24<sup>th</sup> November at Shin Kamar another IED took the lives of three more scouts namely, Subedar Khan Alam Mahsud, Sepoy Ayub Gul Bhattani and Sepoy Ishaq Ali Turi and seven others were injured.

**2011** was no different from previous years but extensive and aggressive patrolling and area domination by the Mahsud scouts had lessen the hold of the miscreants but it was a continuous battle. Almost daily operations were carried out and suspects being caught. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011 in a search and cordon operation carried out by 1W, 2W, 3W and 1W Khyber Rifles in Alam Guddar for the rescue of a

kidnapped khassadar , a fierce fire fight erupted resultantly six scouts all sepoy's embraced shahadat and two were injured.

IEDs did alter the way of warfare in Bara Valley, Mahsud Scouts posts are well spread in the area and they all require replenishment of ration and ammunition apart from the administration of troops which includes their leave and training. On 17<sup>th</sup> October during one such replenishment at Jhansi, Dogra, Milward, Darro Adda, the convoys were hit with sniper and rocket launchers, eight soldiers of Khyber rifles and one from Mahsud scouts embraced shahadat and four others {all from Khyber rifles} were injured. On 20<sup>th</sup> October an operation was conducted in the area Nullah, it was one of the heaviest in terms of manpower, 1W, 2W, 3W of Mahsud Scouts, 3W Khyber rifles, company e SOG, companies of Mohmand rifles, Chitral Scouts and Swat scouts took part in it. Heavy exchange of fire resulted in the shahadat of Captain Ghulam Qadir, Havildar Muhammad Qasim both from SOG and Sepoy Aslat Gul of Mohmand rifles, 12 other scouts were injured including two from Mahsud Scouts.

In an operation carried out in Arjali nadi , 106 suspects were arrested out of which 100 were released and only six were detained. Houses of miscreant commanders including Sher wali, Mada Gul and Hussain were demolished. Five more houses were burnt on 12<sup>th</sup> in Meri khel area. New posts at Khoi and Daulat Khel resulted in five more houses of miscreants being demolished, one miscreant was killed in this encounter as well. Big arms cache was found in the operation carried out on the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2011 in general area Chargai Dograi, no less than 299 mortar bombs were captured from the miscreants. The Daulat Khel post was attacked by the miscreants on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2012 and four scouts of Swat Scouts were injured where as Lance Naik Iftikhar Mohmand embraced shahadat.

## **2012- Maira Sar**

Maira Sar is the highest peak in the area overlooking the Fort Salop and Shin Kamar Pass. 23 Baluch and 35 Azad Kashmir Regiments, 2W , 3W of Mahsud Scouts, 3W Khyber rifles and two companies of SOG were part of the force. Tactical headquarters was established at Shin Kamar. On 16<sup>th</sup> February 2012 aerial pounding was done in which Cobras and airforce jets took part followed by artillery fire, a troop of tank was also placed at Shin Kamar. It was a two prong advance with 8 AK regiment supporting the Lawata prong. Another feature of this operation was the induction of village defence committee {VDC} which comprised of loyal tribes, these are mainly broken away factions who are good in holding their own area by virtue of their knowledge of the area. On 17<sup>th</sup> Maira Sar was captured, sepoy Ahmed Shah of Mahsud scouts embraced shahadat along with two other scouts belonging to SOG and four persons of Aman Lashkar and three were injured. An IED blast in one of the 23 Baluch bunker on 18<sup>th</sup> took the lives of five soldiers.

In another related incident, Sniper fire on Nullah post resulted in an injury to Naik Amir Muhammad Bangash of Mahsud scouts, later a heavy contingent was sent to evacuate the injured soldiers, during the move back the QRF itself came under attack , three soldiers of 23 Baluch laid their lives while three other including two from Mahsud scouts were injured. The deadliest attack came on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2012 at Maira Sar when ten soldiers of 23 Baluch embraced shahadat and eight other were injured.

Alam Guddar was another hot spot where a operation was conducted on 10<sup>th</sup> March, 39 miscreants were killed while three own soldiers including an officer of 17 FF embraced shahadat and ten

other were injured including one from Mahsud scouts. Houses of suspected miscreant commanders including Maulvi faqir and Wazeer were demolished on 20<sup>th</sup> march 2012 and 125 suspects were arrested. Rasool jan Markaz was cordoned in the early hours of 22<sup>nd</sup> April by 2W{MS}, 3W KR, 17FF and 35 AK regiments in Aziz market area, markaz was demolished and five miscreants were killed .

## **June 2012**

1Wing QRF was on patrol under command Captain Manna Ul Hassan, as they reached near the Al haj market an IED blasted which rip through the vehicle, Captain Manan , Naik tariq Mohmand, Lance naik Kamran Bangash, Lance naik Yousaf Bhattani, sepoy Bahadur shah Mohmand, Ali Badshah Afridi, Khan Afzal Bangash and lance naik Nawaz Gul Bangash of Khattak scouts all embraced shahadat while three other scouts were injured who were immediately evacuated to Peshawar. Captain Manan was a cheerful officer , his father always calls at Fort Salop when ever any accident is reported in media and prays for the safety of all.

Lashkar Islam was mostly busy in hit and run operations, they would use a pick up , park it at some place, sprinkle the place with water brought in a bucket , place the mortar and fire few rounds, by the time their location is ascertained with the help of radars they simply move and flee into the thick growth. In one such raid carried out on Jhansi Fort on 18<sup>th</sup> august 2012, sepoy Mohammad Khateeb Mahsud embraced shahadat. Miscreants fired 15 rockets out of which ten landed inside the fort, five scouts wounded which were taken to the Peshawar.

Evacuation of wounded by itself is an operation, on one hand is the early and speedy evacuation of the injured scout which directly affects the morale, on the other hand is the hard reality of endangering more scouts in the rescue operations. An elaborate decision has to be taken in time judging all the angles. Culturally the scouts do not care much about their own lives when it comes to the rescue of fellow scouts but at times commander had to wait for an hour to carry out the rescue operation.

December 2012. A constant and continuous skirmishes continued between the Mahsud scouts and miscreants, they resorted to sniper firing and Mahsud scouts carried out sting operations on suspected localities mostly on intelligence tips. Checking the movement of people in the area, domination of the valley and imposing the writ of state. IEDs remained the biggest threat in the area. In an incident on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2012 one such blast took the life of Sepoy Muhammad Hasim Youasfzai of 5Wing Swat scouts.

## **Ghundai Post, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012**

Perhaps the most devastating incident of the last few years when the post was attacked by the miscreants and were able to overrun it and get away with a sizeable quantity of weapons, ammunition, artion and other items. It all started on 12<sup>th</sup> December at 1745 hours when the post came under fire attack, initially mortars were fired by the miscreants which all fell short of it. Miscreants were engaged with artillery in eastern direction towards Mufti Madrassah. A heavy lashkar was reported by the post commander at 1818 at the base of the post . By 1830 hours the base bunkers of the post had been captured by the miscreants. Reinforcement was sent but by 1855 hours Post Commander Subedar Wali Khan reported the situation to be out of hand due to overwhelming numbers of miscreants, at 1905 hours he informed about vacating the post along with 15 other scouts by 1910 it was all over post was in the hand



of miscreants. The scouts after vacating the post had gathered at Kohi Post. A counter attack was being planned and troops were being move and they established positions by 2230 hours. They move foward and reached the top by 0230 hours; it was taken back. Sniper continued oin the post and it resulted in the shahadat of a sepoy Jahangir Khan Afridi on 17<sup>th</sup> December while another afridi scout was injured. Nullah Post was another hard hit post mostly by sniper fire.

## 2013

There w3as heacvy fog in January which made the operations bit difficult especially due to keeping direction . Arjali nadi came under attack in mid January which was beaten back, however Naik Hussain Ahemed Mohmand and Sepoy Aminullah Khattak of mahsud Scouts lost their lives along with two soldiers of 71 Punjab Regiment , eight soldiers were injured all from Mahsud Scouts.

In January 2013 command was changed and anded over to Colonel Naeem Sarwar who was already commanding the Khatak Scouts, a gunner officer who have been battalion commander in Pakistan Military Academy. Sting operations wre carried out as in past, however one mark change at present is the efforts of commandant to bring back the normalcy in the bara Valley. It is being achieved with aggressive verbal and physical bouts with the miscreants and simulatanosuly an effort is undrerway to win the heart and ionsds of local population. Polio drop campaign resulted in over 18000 children being given the vaccination. On first two days 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> June it was carried out in Bar Kambar Khel and on 12<sup>th</sup> in Sepah area which is heart land of Mangal bagh, til 1200 hours not a single family came however commandant's message to Faqir Wali in the area changed the scenario. Most significant is the opening of Bara Canal. Reconaissance with irrigation department was carried out on 113<sup>th</sup> june, commandant himself went to see the spera Dam, on the way abck he adopted the Kuhi route which was closed since 2010. This small step will go a long way in establishing the writ of government and finishing no go areas in the agency.

**Operation Sheraz** was a 24-30 hours operation conducted from evening 9<sup>th</sup> February to mid night 10<sup>th</sup> February. A total of eight companies were employed (2x Companies ex 71 Punjab, AK Light Commando, company ex 35 AK, SOG-1, SOG-4 and two pooled companies ex MS / Swat Scout / Khyber Rifles / ISCR troops) during the operation. Aim was to Philologically dent miscreants through a targeted operation with deception, initially and thereafter. Later sanitize area from Gandao to Spera Dam (Western side) and Fort Jhansi- Spera Dam (Eastern Side).

On 24<sup>th</sup> February 2013 during "Operation Sheraz-2" . 1Wing was deployed in cordon near Nalla Post, during the operation Company Azad Kashmir Light Commando Battalian reported that there is shortage of ammunition with them and asked for immediate supply. Number 701790 **Havildar Shahid Ali Bangash** deployed in cordon near Nalla Post with Quick Reaction Force 1Wing, immediately loaded the ammunition in Armed Personnel Carrier vehicle and under heavy fire voluntarily rushed towards the site along with driver Number 704248 Sepoy Hanif Shah. On reaching the spot he realized that the combat group which had to take the ammunition for company Azad Kashmir Light Commando Battalion did not reach the RV. He was out of communication with his Wing Commander so he rushed back for further orders. He was again sent back to the same RV, which he again did and successfully handed over the required ammunition to the company Azad Kashmir Light Commando Battalion. His unprecedented display of courage, valour, dedication and selfless attitude assisted the company Azad Kashmir Light

Commando Battalion to engage the terrorists causing considerable damage both in terms of men and material.

Present. At present there is cessation of violence in the valley, an operation in undergoing to capture the heights of Tirah and maidan which were successfully accomplished on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2013. Bara Bazar once bustling with life gives the look of a ghost town, deserted and awful silence occasionally broken by jet aircraft flying over head.

### **Mahsud Scouts Dance Party**

Dance is a rhythmic representation of the culture, in pathan tribal culture dance is by itself a manifesto of militancy; yet none matches the ferocity and utter frivolity of soul carrying daggers and whirling around shaking their heads in accordance with the drum beats. Commissioner Karachi was witness and guest at one such event arranged in his honour in 1966 and he rewarded with Rupees two hundred to them. They have performed at President's House, at annual Horse and cattle show at Lahore and regular performers at Landi Kotal Khyber Rifles. Strength of party at Lahore would be over fifty headed by a junior commissioned officer. Band party of Mahsud Scouts was equally popular at all events. Bugler used to carry out the retreat and reveille. In August 1994 Khakroob Mamid Khan Mahsud died at Khyber Rifles Landi Kotal while carrying out rehearsal for the dance; he was member of dance party.

## **CHAPTER II- KHYBER RIFLES**

### **Khyber & Rifles. A personal account**

If ever there is one name in Frontier Warfare which is not bounded by language, time, race and is understood all over the world then very rightly it is Khyber Pass and Khyber Rifles. It is 2100 hours and I am sitting in the Michni Guestroom which is located on the upper storey of this 1960 era architecture {Deco} the original mess building which was constructed in 1900 is across the far end of the lawn it is now commandant's house. I came here in the morning from Peshawar with the Commandant Khyber Rifles Colonel Mansoor who has taken over a week ago, he was previously defence attaché at Uzbekistan. We started off at 0800 hours, I woke up at 0615 hours with great difficulty but managed to be in time, it is always good to start a venture on time. The driver with me Havildar Syed Ali Mahsud was a friendly person and we had a lively talk all through the way which took us over an hour due to under construction road being built by Frontier Works Organization{FWO}. The convoy comprised of five vehicles, one with me another with commandant and then two protection vehicles and then a civilian car carrying

commandant's family. We raced out of Peshawar mainly because it was Friday and secondly it was early in the morning.

Like all Pakistanis' I have been brought up watching the Gateway to Khyber on television and currency notes, but never saw it before, name like Jamrud, Ali Masjid, Torkham are part of military history. They all are on the route. We passed Hayatabad, entered into the Khyber Agency the very first shops are of opium and weapons I enquired from the havildar and he replied that well the business is as usual but at very low key. I have been a regular visitor here in 1992 but never had the opportunity, time or guts to travel ahead. In early 70s and even in 80s and 90s people used to visit Kabul on daily basis in early 60s the Pakistanis used to visit Kabul to watch Indian movies. Then came Jamrud fort which was built by the Sikh General Hari Singh Nalwa in 1836.

Khyber Rifles were raised as Khyber Jezailchis in November 1878-9 by the British expeditionary force stationed at Jalalabad, Captain Gaisford and Sardar Aslam Khan then a risaldar are the two major personalities involved in its raising. The convoluted history of raising is mainly due to the fact that events changed very rapidly in this short span of time. The British expeditionary force which had invaded the Afghanistan had opted to take routes one from Peiwar Kotal in Kurram, which lies adjacent to the Afridi homeland of Tirah height and Bara Valley, further south another force had gone towards the Kandahar from the ancient Bolan Pass. British after the ill fated campaign of 1842 had withdrew from the Afghanistan through the Khyber Pass and pass practically remained closed for another thirty years. As a preliminary to the second Afghan War the Khyber Pass was the key and as such an early demonstration of power and diplomacy was required. Major Cavagnari the British political officer designated for Kabul reached an agreement with the Khyber Afridi for a sum of Rupees 5959 per year. Khyber Rifles took birth as a result of treaty of Gandamak 1878 in which the Kabul agreed to relinquish its hereditary control over the pass and also agreed not to intervene with the Afridi clan; the tribe itself was neither informed and neither it cared what kind of agreement has been agreed upon. In September 1880 the British forces evacuated the Afghanistan and the very force of Afridi which comprised of native was the nucleus around which the present day Khyber Rifle takes its history.

It was in early 1881 that a full jirga of Afridi clan was held at Peshawar in which the independence of the tribe was recognized and allowances agreed {rupees 85,860 for the Khyber Afridi}, government to take the toll and clan to provide the force for maintaining order and peace on the pass<sup>8</sup>. This force was Khyber Jezailchis which comprised of native Khyber Afridi and paid by the British. Khyber rifles initially had a strength of 400 footmen and 48 mounted on horse, later it increased to 550 in 1881, having one officer; Sardar Aslam Khan Saddozai, he in turn was under command of the political officer of Khyber Agency which for almost eighteen years was Colonel Warburton. Thus the first twenty years of Rifles history is a history of these

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<sup>8</sup> Colonel H.C. Wyllie from the Black Mountain to Waziristan, first edition, 1912, reprint. Sang e Meel publishers, Lahore, 2003, pp-184-185.

two men who led, reorganize and expanded the Khyber Jezailchis. The natives used to call it Sur Lakkai{red tail}<sup>9</sup> for the reason that the Jezailchis wore the native dress but as a mark of distinction they would put on a red cloth on their turban thus the nick name. In other words it was a levies because they were not issued with any government rifles and only free ration was admissible the pay being paid directly to the clans under silladari system.

The very first operation in which this outfit was employed was in Bazar area {Zakkha Khel} and they did well. The role of them was more of a scout leading the way for the British regular army units and keeping the pass open mostly from their own clans. In 1890 the government in recognition of their service and as a mark of trust started issuing them the official rifles

Khyber Rifles take their origin to the second Afghan War of 1879 when they were raised as Khyber Jazailchis with Major Nawab Aslam Khan as the first commandant. Khyber Pass itself came into limelight due to 1<sup>st</sup> Afghan War of 1839. The British East Indian troops did not marched through it rather they opted for the Kandahar {Bolan Pass} but their retreat and relief was through Khyber Pass and that is how Khyber Pass and Khyber Rifles became synonym .

### **Khyber Rifles**

Khyber Rifles{KR} has the oldest and one of the most chequered history among all the corps of Frontier Corps{FC}. They are the oldest component of FC, raised in 1879 as an irregular tribal force comprising of some 300 odd Afridi tribesmen with a single aim to keep the historic pass open year around and to ensure the safe passage of caravans and more importantly the British army for its subsequent operations against Afghanistan. When the occasion arrived in 1919 with the start of Third Afghan War the soldiers deserted en mass resulting in the disbandment of the corps. It was raised again in 1941 as Afridi Battalion and took part in the war mainly carrying out protective duties in the rear. It was again disbanded in 1946 at Sialkot and Khyber Rifles were re-raised at the same station and stationed at their home town of Landi Kotal where they are present till now. It took part in the 1965 Pakistan-India war and was awarded a Sitara-e-Jurat, it had its share of action in the 1971 Pakistan-India war mainly on eastern front. Till the start of war against terror in 2001 it was mainly occupied in keeping peace on the border and quelling the odd miscreant in the agency; which had gain notoriety in drugs all over the world. However since 2005 when FC came under operational control of army the KR have been busy all over the tribal areas in hunting the terrorists in collaboration with other corps and army. In the process no less than sixty scouts have embraced shahadat and over two hundred have been injured.

Khyber Rifle's main fame is in its holding and guarding the historic pass Khyber, and being a host to a galaxy of native and foreign dignitaries who visits the pass they range from

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<sup>9</sup> Colonel sir George Warburton, eighteen years in the Khyber 1879-1898, first published 1900, reprint, sang e meel, 2007, p-94.

field marshalls, emperors, crown princes, queens, generals, admirals, sportsmen, actors, clergy, writers , premiers, presidents, air marshalls, politicians to name few.

Khyber Pass is the most natural way of movement between the Kabul-Peshawar-Lahore-Delhi and onwards to Calcutta in east and towards the central asia on west. Pass itself starts almost ten miles west of Peshawar with Jamrud as the base town and then gradual climb with a swindling track{presently FWO is constructing road which is built till Ali Masjid}. Population is thin on both sides of road, barren void of water and generally dry. The present day road journey despite the under construction road does not take more than an hour. The ever present long Mercedes trailers coming from Kabul carrying goods and military hardware of NATO, non custom paid vehicles, and many other vehicles keep it busy from sunrise to sunset. One obvious absence is that of motorcycles, I did not saw even a single motor cycle in today's journey and neither I saw any one carrying weapons. It is hard to belief that it is the same notorious Khyber Pass. Presence of women is a very handy yardstick to measure the civilization hold in the agency, they are rare sight in Upper Tochi Valley, here in Khyber they are obvious, I saw many of them waiting for the public transport sitting beside the road, I saw them moving in flock carrying water buckets, sitting in vans and so on yet all were covered in chaddar and not in shuttle cock burqa. That was heartening for me as these signs are evidence of pacification of people in the agency.

The famous railway line which was once termed as impossible to construct and which took decades of paper work and was finally made operational in 1922 is now in ruins, at places it is shredded and tottering in pieces.

Since 1836 when the Sikhs were defeated at Ali Masjid till now the landmarks all along the track have hardly altered with the exception of two, one the house or killa of Haji Ayub Afridi who was once rated as the most honest and hospitable drug smuggler of his time, he also had the distinction of firing a shot at Nehru during his speech at Peshawar in 1946; Ayub was a khassadar then. Other is the Miri Mosque where a blast in 2009 killed over 92 tribesmen, mosque has been built new. The other landmark is Ali Masjid, the tradition goes that Hazrat Ali came here and built a mosque, opposite the mosque is a huge boulder believed to be thrown by Hazrat Ali; yet the population is entirely composed of Sunni faith.

I arrived at Landi Kotal after an hour of historic drive to enter into Khyber Rifles Mess another historic landmark, I have read and heard so much about it that I felt as if I have been here before, a large mess with open green lawn a rare sight here, it is double storied and decorated in style. The gallery of the mess is the most talk about in the world because no where else one finds such luminaries like Carter, Nixon, Thatcher, Raza Shah, Robert de Niro, Mahattir, King Hussein, Queen Elizabeth, Diana, Sachin Tendulkar, Quaid e Azam, to name few who have visited and presented their autograph photographs and shields. The variety of shields are a subject in themselves. Wooden, brass, plastic, crystal, paper, cloth, etching, engraving, and all that has been possible are here; these shields are from almost every country including North

Korea, Zimbabwe, Jordan, Abu Dhabi, Glasgow Police, Defence Intelligence Agency, Canadian Mounted Police, Australian parliament, Swiss armed forces, France, Portugal and even India. Probably the only mess in Pakistan where the shields presented by Indian defence attaches are placed prominently. It is a who is who of Pakistan military, General Zia Ul Haq { he served in Khyber Rifles as major in 1954} Generals Abdul Waheed Kakkar, Musharraf, and Field Marshall Ayub Khan have graced this mess. These shields are an insight into the country's culture there are some who have taken the pain to engrave the presented to Khyber Rifles and others have simply presented by so and so. Many of the shields have lost their colour and shine and the insignias itself have lost their shape and even the screws have become loose. All in all over 1200 such shields adorn the long wall and two rooms of the mess. There are walls dedicated to single country, USA, UK are the leading visitors followed by Turkey. There are rare souvenirs also like the autographed bats of English and Indian cricket teams, the legend like Sachin Tendulkar is there smiling at Torkham Post so is Diana.

Outside is a tree which is in chains because a drunk British officer felt it moving one night in 1913 and ordered it to be chained and it is still chained, the new heritage complex which I have not seen today. Mess havildar took me out for a walk and we first went to the mess staff living quarters where I saw the dhobi ironing and talking on mobile simultaneously. The camp is huge, previously it had an outer mud wall as late as 1940 but it is no more there. The water supply comes from Torkham through a pipe and is stored at Mirza Piquet which is located on the northern side at a mile distance.

In the evening had a cup of tea in the mess lawn and enjoyed the company of two officers both Major Major Raza and other I am forgetting his name. There was a lady get together at the mess and thus we also had the opportunity to enjoy the chicken, noodles and dehi balay followed by cup of tea. Talk range from importance of sports in army to the disadvantages of mobile phone. Issue of my own menu was also discussed and finally they agree to chalk it out themselves. In all the Frontier Corps messes there is no set menu rather it is what you would like to eat. I normally avoid meat in such circumstances where I don't have to pay the bill because it looks odd to order an expensive meal; I also avoid using transport in such matters thus we chalked out a plan where I was given the freedom to walk around. Later I came to my room.

My room is spacious, large and huge just like a seventies film of Muhammad Ali, it is designed in a manner which creates nostalgia, I do not use air conditioner also when it is free. Later the commandant came for a courtesy call. He is from 25 Cavalry and has been a defence attaché in Uzbekistan for three years thus I had many questions to ask, how is the weather, how is economy, law and order, people, their religious affiliations and above all their ferocity. Colonel Mansoor gave ample and satisfying replies. In nutshell Uzbekistan is an autocratic society where 90% population is Muslims yet religion is discouraged, none is allowed to have prayer room in any factory or office, strict intelligence, almost one intelligence person on every three persons. No foreigner can move out of city without getting himself registered with police even locals also have to abide by these conditions. No one is allowed to keep weapon, eight

years in jail for keeping one bullet. People are conservative wearing long dresses and no shorts in Ferghana Valley. Tashkent and Samarkand are the two most open cities with night life, no café can be opened unless it serves alcohol. Law and security is very strict and even a nude girl can walk safely back to her apartment at night. Parallel economy of corruption is there; by and large Uzbeks are stiff neck people. Amu Darya is the main river, country is plain in nature with fifth largest cotton growing country. Fruits are proverbial in taste especially the watermelons, Tamerlane is the national hero and his statues are everywhere, one president is in power since 1991.

And sure I thought about you all the way from Peshawar to Landi Kotal, now it is warm here in the room , so good nite.

## **Day Two.**

Got up late because all night sleep was far away, excitement, nostalgia and above all fear of unknown. Anyway the first issue was the shower, it is modern gadget and despite all my efforts I failed to understand its function thus filled a bucket with tap water and took a shower and made a mental note to find its operation from the sweeper. Had a cup of tea and a toast in breakfast and then moved down had a round of cultural building, a sheer wastage of money but then keeping in view the number of foreign delegation may be it is required but nothing extraordinary perhaps it looks to me that way. Sat in lawn just staring at the far end , a lush green lawn with birds running around, there are a dosen cranes here and they all move together. A fat cock was running after the hens too.

Day was warm and it was pleasant to sit in shade. The vehicle came to my disappointment driver was a Mullagori tribe but he picked three more escort guards including Subedar Sana Khattak and we moved out towards the first destination a water reservoir piquet.

Drive was interesting, it was school closing time and students all male were wearing blue shalwar kameez instead of militia colour, quite a number of trucks { 14000-17000 vehicles move daily across this border}. I saw a local grave yard the way it is different from normal is in the afct that natives erecta large flat stone at times two on grave thus it gives an odd but not frightening picture, there are many graveyards and they are nestled in between the houses. Shops were open and people moving in normal manner none was carrying any weapons, driver informed me that now it is forbidden and only those are allowed to carry arms who have any vendetta around them. Passing through the mud habitat having a paved road we headed towards the piquet which is at a higher elevation having barbed wire all around it, a deserted pond in front. The guard commander Havildar Sadiq Yousafzai welcomed me and in Pashtu told a sepoy to fetch a cold drink but I do understand the language now thus I asked for only a glass of local

water which he reluctantly brought. View is good, all around I saw mud and plaster houses and I was informed that this area belongs to Shinwari tribe and they have three sub clans who live here apart from Afghans. The house are at low level thus I could see what is going on inside, woman cooking , children running but overall void of life. In Waziristan it could have sparked a war had this kind of piquet been there as it happened in 2011 but here piquet is old and houses are new thus morally the militia has an upper hand. By this time I was convinced that area is peaceful in nature.

Went inside the piquet , it has cemented staircase for entrance otherwise all around a solid block of bricks, only four men were inside, they had two charpoys outside as well with a radio. Electricity is only for an hour everyday, cooking is done by the piquet with fresh ration coming daily, I saw a goat moving around and recalled the standing orders of Tochi Scouts of 1922 which forbids goats at piquet mainly for bestiality.

British established the present camp in 1899 and by 1910 had constructed the piquet covering all sides of the camp at higher elevation. All in all there are four such piquets and post, the difference between post and piquet is in size, post have more capacity of troops. After an hour we move back. The deserted water reservoir was once brimmed with water and source of life, water is scarce here, I did not realized it in mess but here life revolves around water. The source is at ten miles away near the Pak-Afghan border .

Return journey was more comfortable and knowledgeable, saw a shop having the name Israel sabzi shop, not much of people on road, saw sign posting of lady doctors clinics, coaching centres, petrol pumps and so on. We move from east towards the northern side towards a piquet known as Mirza Post, the driver temporarily lost the way and while we were reversing I saw two women walking and they tried to cover their face when they saw us but there was no urgency in them. Mirza post is not the original name but I will trace it soon. The post looks magnificent work of defence , it dominates the area, it is on higher elevation , much bigger in size can hold over 100 soldiers for a fortnight, absolutely covered with only firing slits visible like poke marks on a cheese slab. The post commander initially took me around this solid block of stone. The Shinwari tribe is the neighbor at low elevation. There are no stair cases rather a iron ladder which can be pulled up too. Inside I came to know that it has three tiers, the lowest level then the one which I climbed and another one at upper which can be reached through a wooden broad staircase with steep angle. At the top one half of roof is covered and other half is open to let the sun rays come in. At all corners at all tiers less the base are solid iron protruding boxes with firing slits, I later climbed to the roof as well which is connected with a bamboo ladder it is difficult to climb. The view from top vibrantly a refreshing one , one can se all around, the road junction, the camp, the village around, the communication towers at far mountains. Later I came down and accepted the offer of green tea 'Shilmanni' it is a local specialty , the herb is found in Shilmani tribe area. The post commander further increased my knowledge of how to make the green tea, first boil the water, then add sugar and then few herbs of Shilman. The cost of herb is at present about 400 Rupees per kilogram.



Down below is the water reservoir with two colours on the roof, one is meant for local population and other for the militia, the reservoir is divided from inside with a wall. We went down to the basement also and appreciated the construction and design of post. It is mud brick from inside outside the stones have been used, floor are made of wood so is the roof with steel girders in between, I tried to find out the company who made it, normally TATA were the main suppliers of iron, there girders have been used at Thal Fort also but I could not find the name of manufacturer. There is very little electricity no connection from camp, water for post also comes on a bowser and on my inquiry that why don't you use electric motor to suck water the answer was vague in nature. One good thing about soldiers of FC is that they do not crib against the superiors. Post commander was hopeful that he will get it done once the new commandant comes here on his visit. The water bowser cost locals around Rupees fifty which is quite heavy on them. I pondered over the fact that in last thirteen years no such piquet or post ahs been constructed by army or FC, strange but it is true that many post like Isha have been repeatedly targeted by terrorist but they were never constructed on such quality. Thus the losses in war are not unavoidable rather the inefficiency of military is also responsible for them. The post meant to have hundred troops had only six, they cook at their own , there was no sweeper at the post, the cooking area was dirty and over all post needs a patron , regular visits of officers especially commandant are must. This post is in original condition as they have not constructed a cement stairs for ease.

Drive back , driver asked me whether I would like to see the Landi Kotal bazaar, I agreed if it is in rules and protection is sufficient, he smiled and said the area is peaceful. We drove into bazaar, on the way I saw militia giving route protection , on inquiry I was informed that they are for the safety of NATO containers, I noticed the absence of khassadars{tribal police} and driver guessed that may be it is Saturday and they are on holidays, but I did noticed them while we were coming towards the post. Bazaar all belongs to Shinwari. Taxis, shops of all kind less arms or they were not visible, petrol pump, publicity hoardings of mobile companies, hotels, fruit shops , one odd bakery, no beggars and no music in air. It looks too peaceful and commercial, more like Dir. Saw the old railway station and railway colony, the train service has been terminated after the floods of 2005 which swept away the tracks near Ali Masjid.

Later had a drive around the camp, saw a group of women and children most unusual sign and driver promptly told me that they are Christians mostly sweepers , in Tochi even these dare not venture out in such outfits. Paid a homage to the martyrs monument of 7 Division, there is a brigade of army here as well but at the moment all its battalions less one is on deployment in different parts of the area. It is again unusual for a militia to have a regular army unit living beside it. The camp does not have a solid wall what they have cannot be called an effective wall. This is why I mentioned earlier that cultural heritage building is wastage of money; wall is more important. Only Mahsud scouts have constructed a wall in these years, Colonel Janjua stands out among all commandants of Frontier Corps for his this deed . I talked about him with driver and he also agreed about Colonel Janjua because he had been at Fort Salop.

In the evening there was a dinner for a visiting officer , there was a lunch for another senior officer , I was invited but I tactfully avoided it but now I had the meal, a lavish one but settled for the platter and then nap of an hour. In the evening when I had a look at the mess lawn I saw sofas and tables with lights , surely a party but why and for whom , I soon found out that it for visiting brigadier of engineers, I was invited and I accepted it. The dance party or cultural troupe of frontier Corps has performed at White house also. Major General Ghayoor has mentioned about the Mahsud dance party and their unique style of dance. They all have long hair, fancy dresses and when they started off it was thrilling, each tribes dance party acme one at a time, Mahsud were the first , comprising of thirty odd scouts, all having long hair. Mahsud dance is certainly very manly, the beat is heavy and no feminine shrilling voice or music of flute just drums and they move their heads as if they are going for a war, all of a sudden one dancer starts whirling around the lawn in a circle at a breath taking speed. Mohmand were the next they had a flute, then Chitralis, they are soft in nature their dance is more like two peacocks having a date, it is flute oriented. In the end the Khattak with their swords thrilled the ten odd guests including myself and four hosts.

I met the old mess waiter Gul Anar he has been serving the mess for last forty five years now his son Owais is also working in the mess, another cook Aarsal { I think } had died last year he served Khyber rifles for well over sixty years.

Dinner in the open, mostly Bar BQ , fruit salad, rice, mutton, fish, qorma{ I avoided it } conversation ranging mostly about education, Aitcheson College, university and so on. Later a good ice cream{not hand made} followed by green tea and another hour of military gossips in which I was the silent occupant. The lights went out for ten minutes and in this I saw the moon which was veiled between the leaves of high tall pine trees, what a view.

#### **Day Four. Torkham**

I had no intention or plan of going anywhere today, I slept with an vow to get up early thus to join the Rifles in their daily chores. I was able to manage that and started typing the data, then came the Hasan Kuki Khel Afridi to my room , he is a young lad who is the photographer of the Rifles. I had given him the History of Tochi scouts book to show around the scouts in order to tell them and motivate them to have good photographs; mission as accomplished as Hasan told me that he has taken few pictures of the medical platoon. The good news was that commandant has gone to Peshawar, although Colonel Mansoor is an excellent officer yet the aura of Commandant is very forceful and I naturally felt bit relax.

After shower I went down, oh, I had a cup of tea and single toast in breakfast. At lawn I met the mess havildar and I took his picture he requested that he wants his picture to be taken

with the sun dial , I did as he desired. I walked towards the office block which is in fact just across the western wall of the mess separated by an iron old red gate. From the design pattern it looks that initially only the walled compound was there and this mess building came up later probably in post 1945 era. Saw scouts working on an house which happens to DQ's house. In the office area I met the adjutant Major Naveed , a good mannered officer and soon it revealed that he is from Air Defence 142 Gun Missile Regiment. Now this unit is known as 'Karma Wali' and it was raised by Lt Col Ilyas who was my commanding officer also. Thus all ice broken and we were comfortable, Colonel Mansoor had already given the instructions to all that all possible help is to be extended; so different from Chitral where commandant had no time for me even for a courtesy call. We talked about Colonel Ilyas , his son is now commissioned in same regiment. Major Naveed gave me a briefing on map explaining the deployment and the operations conducted so far.

Names like Lalpura and Dakka are so familiar to my eyes and mind, I am keen to see the northern end of this ridge line where it debouches into the River Kabul some twenty miles from Landi Kotal towards north. My anxiety and apprehension is as to know whether the river banks can afford caravan movement , it seems affirmative but I still want to see it myself. If it is true then the question arises that why should anyone use this curving , hard , barren and ferocious route of Khyber Pass why not the easy path of following River Kabul, but it will take time. Major Naveed further enhanced my interest by offering me to go to Tirah Valley the heart of Afridi, it takes three hours and route is absolute safe. Four months ago it was not the case and all troops had to be sustained by helicopters. Initially an army brigade was deployed there but it was pulled out in 2009 and Managl Bagh then established himself. Thus an operation was conducted in which Major Naveed also took part to clear them. On the very first day 3 Commando Battalion suffered over a dozen casualties same was the fate of 8 Punjab Regiment but valiantly they cleared the area and established the writ of state there. Zakkha Khel a sub clan of Afridi played an important role in it. They had a fall out with Managl Bagh and thus joined the state's forces { Mizh Mahsud visit notes}. Zakkha Khel was never the favored clan of government since last one hundred years and they were not even enrolled in Khyber rifles but things have changed now. Zakkha Khel now man the piquets en route and it is safe. In the conversation he asked me whether I would like to go to Chahar Bagh, I was stunned at this offer, Chahr Bagh another historical place, furthermore he informed me that I can also see Michni and Torkham in the same trip as both are controlled by the No.5 Wing located at Chahar Bagh, I grabbed the offer and he ordered the vehicle and escort to be ready.

We talked about regimental history, soon Major Raza also joins in , he was still keen on my yesterday's point about the lone Sitara-e- Jurat of Khyber Rifles and sheer absence of his name anywhere in Khyber Rifles area. The irony with Khyber Rifles is that all their attention is focused on the Officer Mess and the flow of foreign dignitaries thus other aspects are bound to be overlooked.

Yesterday I had a walk in the evening with the commandants orderly and went around the complete area, it becomes obvious when you see artillery shells lying under an open shed, one single rocket can cause a catastrophic end results, the neglected garden in front of the regimental hospital where in good time a fountain was also installed but now the grass is uncut and in shabby conditions, the pathetic looking graveyard in the western corner which I was very interested to have a look, I saw only one grave with an epitaph that was a major's daughter who died in 1979 age just three months old. I also had round of the canteen and canteen contractor is quite old, canteen was neat and clean.

Anyway coming back to the main topic, we moved out at 1200 hours and sped pass the town , I had the Hassan photographer with me and he proved to be of great assistance. The Pass starts descending and we after ten minutes reached a cross junction from where we took a right turn for Chahar Bagh. Being in Militia vehicle with guard gives you immense advantage, you can take shoots of the area, you are not stuck in any traffic jam , which occurs due to heavy long vehicles movement going and coming from Torkham. There are two lanes on pass now, one is used by the trucks and other for light vehicles, even Landi Kotal has a by pass. The No.5 Wing deployed at Chahar Bagh is being commanded by Lt Col Mushtaq of 36 FF. The road to Chahar Bagh is narrow but in good condition, I saw school boys wearing orange colour uniform which is very obvious , it seems that militia colour is not worn here in schools, other reason is that they are studying in private school that is why other day I saw students in light blue colour uniform. I saw even girls going to school which is very unusual but by now I have a conviction that Landi Kotal is much more liberal than any other Pathan town astride Durand Line, other logic is that they all belong to Shinwari Tribe which by these proofs seem to be liberal.

Chahr Bagh is a Persian word meaning Four Gardens, it is situated few miles towards west of Landi Kotal camp on the road leading to the Torkham. At Michni the diversion takes place towards Chahrbagh. It took us not more than half an hour in a jeep to reach CharBagh from camp.

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**Chahr bagh** is the most fertile area, in fact it supplies water to the Landi Kotal as well. I saw a field of corn , the very first such field in days, air pleasant, scenery refreshing with fear lifting with every second and confidence level rising no more fear of IEDs or ambush. After another ten minutes drive we were at Chahr Bagh , a fort constructed in 1926, a solid piece of stone with a small gate which hardly allows a small vehicle to pass through, inside a small

courtyard with double storied building . The wing commander was there receiving me, i developed a liking for him from the first moment .He took me upstairs , wooden stairs , yellow and red colour used freely, it is the wing colour. There was no electricity but it was pleasant. I knew from Major Naveed that Lt Col Mushtaq is preparing for his master's exam in international affairs with paper due tomorrow, I noticed the red stripe on his right chest which indicates serious injury sustained in an operations. It certainly demands respect and I was not lacking in this manner. Our conversation was polite mostly on studies and general pattern of life. I inquired about him regarding the area, culture, environments. Lt Col Mushtaq happens to be student and later unit officer of my course mate Brigadier Naveed Safdar.

Area is peaceful with Shinwari tribe in majority, no crimes in the area, main issue is the responsibility of Torkham border checkpoint for which Mushtaq is wholly responsible certainly with commandant looking upon. He quoted an interesting incident where the Afghan national army {ANA} beaten the sweeper of the wing on which Mushtaq demanded an apology which was refused by the Afghans and in retaliation he{Mushtaq} just closed the border. The closing of border is an international issue but commandant stood behind Mushtaq and after a day the Afghans did offered an apology, in another incident over twenty Pakistanis were beaten by the Afghans inside their territory even when they showed their passport, Afghans simply torn these and threw in river and telling them 'to find them back at Attock'. Again border was closed and it resulted in a flag meeting after three days , with an apology the border was open again. I asked him about how jirga is convened and how it is conducted. His reply was that basically the maliks who are nominated by the political agent with as many four or five in one village, if anything of interest or grievance take place then the maliks do send message, Mushtaq understands their financial aspect as in his words ' not many maliks can even afford the fare to come to his headquarters' thus he goes around, in other cases it can be a convening order from his side also. In the jirga almost all maliks attend along with anyone else who wants to be there, normally they sit on ground with hand woven carpet laid along with cushions, or if they come to his office than chairs are offered. Normally either the elder malik stars proceeding or Mushtaq himself will open up highlighting the reason for the jirga. In one instance the complaint was from Shilman tribe as they have been suffering from the ban on the sale of fertilizers as they were being used in explosives also. Mushtaq resolved the matter by offering them one bag per farmer provided he brings a affidavit from the malik that this will not be used for any miscreant purpose. Mushtaq highlighted his point by stating that despite the break down of railway the tracks are still intact and not stolen because of these high moral grounds of keeping the words. Mushtaq had nothing but contempt for the Afghans his words or feelings are the same which British also had regarding these Afghans in their time, thieves, liars and so on. I think majority of the traits attributed negatively about Afridi are in fact due to Afghans character and doing.

Meanwhile he informed me and requested to put on the ranks of promotion to two newly scouts, one havildar to naib subedar and other getting second pip . I was really thrilled and honoured but politely declined his offer, he told me that it is ok as far as the tradition goes

because in many cases the relatives of the promoted scouts come and put on the ranks. I recalled that in Tochi one of the malik was putting on captains' rank to an officer therefore in nodded in approval. Naik Hassan Kuki Khel meanwhile was busy in taking the pictures , tea break was ordered but it was taking time. I do not want to waste his time thus I really had to put my foot down that Mushtaq will not accompany me to the Torkham border and he will study ; he reluctantly agreed. While they were busy in group photograph which took place down stairs at the flag hoisting area which was where our vehicles were parked; I had a round of the roof taking pictures and having an orientation of the fort and the area.

Tea break came in layers , all kind of meat dishes, mutton tikka , mutton chops, chicken, kebabs, chips, and so on. Then we move down and in an garceful ceremony put on the ranks turn by turn to the two scouts. It is certainly a great honour for me and a mile stone in the life of these, I could feel that Mushtaq is particularly not happy with naib subedar promotion and told him so that it is because of my presence that he is getting ranks otherwise he might have to wait for another week. There were no less than a dozen garlands wrapped around havildar ... and only one was put around the naib subedar. We bid adieu to him, Lt Col Mushtaq had already passed the instructions at Michni for my reception. We adopted the same route and soon join the main road. After another few minutes of drive we were at Michni Post.

**Michni post** without any debate is the most famous post in the world { Check point Charlie came up much much later}, it is historical in a sense that it was constructed back in 1900, renovated many times the last one taking place in 2012, and every head of state who visits Pakistan is invariably brought here, delegations comes from all over world to feel the romance of Frontier. It is an old piquet which has been renovated with new outer look. The subedar in charge tried to take me to the briefing room which has a glass front panel with directions . I smilingly told him about the purpose of my visit and thee fore we all walk inside the piquet. . It is similar in size and design to Mirza Piquet or for that matter with any other piquet in Frontier of that era. The piquet constructed at that time falls into two broad categories in terms of capacity and size. This Michni Post falls into lesser category , inside wooden floor, thick walls, white in colour, feeble sun light, wooden stairs leading to upper deck. It was as if I am in my own regiment and not a visitor. The scouts were definitely having relaxed time , wearing their casual dress but I put them at ease and climbed up with these two host and Hassan. View from top was good, one can see all around. On the western side the Torkham was visible through a haze and cloud of mild dust kicked by the trucks. The pass in fact takes a turn here{pass has over 150 turns}, down below me was a khassadar check post, every truck is stopped here and money is taken by khassadar. It should not be taken as bribe rather these khassadar here comprised of three tribes, Shinwari, Shilmani, Afridi and even Mullagori. There is no toll tax on Khyber Pass, one can leave his vehicle for even a week on any part of the pass and it will remain safe that is the duty of khassadar to keep peace in the area. Thus the money which they take from the trucks finances their own existence but more important it helps the tribe to build its financial resources which comes handy when a tribe has to pay a collective fine. I am reading about them, watching them

in almost all part of the frontier and not even once in year and half of travelling I have found them ineffective or lacking courtesy. The windows of the Frontier Corps vehicles have dark shades even then a khassadar knows that an officer is travelling and he always invariably waves hand in respect or salute.

**Tamerlane's Prison**, a historian fallacy, in front of Michni Post down in the small gorge and up on a small hillock are two walls and a structure which has been termed as Tamerlane's prison dating back to 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, before seeing it I was also of the same opinion and thought of seeing it once, however after seeing it I am of the firm opinion that it is a historical fallacy, it is too new in construction and above all why should Tamerlane requires a prison, he was not of the type and temperament to have such kind of institutions. The building would have taken at least half a year to construct and by this time Tamerlane was out of India after massacring one hundred thousand Hindus in one night as per his own autobiography so why should he requires. Furthermore there is no other building of same design or pattern attributed to him, logically one should find more of them at least at Landi Kotal but there are none. I am now questioning all that has been written about frontier after this. One key issue is that no one has come here for a duration to stay majority comes and leaves after an hour { I did the same} thus lot of common folk has become authentic part of history. It was not Tamerlane rather Prince Timur son of Shah Shuja the king of Afghanistan who was deposed and it was in 1839 that he was escorted by Captain Wade of British raj to Kabul.

Another plaque at Michni Post highlights the fact that Doctor Brydon walked into this post in January 1842 which again is a wrong perception because Brydon had walked into the Jalalabad garrison where Lady Sale later capture the scene in her painting the most painting about the frontier till to date.

We left the Michni, waved to the khassadars and move towards the Torkham, the road here really is nothing more than a track of dust, the mountain itself are soft and there was a cloud of dust kicked by heavy trucks but driver drove fearlessly, everyone leaves the way for the militia vehicle. On the left down below the scenery is different with green oasis with little trickle of water with the prison structure on the ridge that divides the water channel. Another few turns and we were on the plain ground heading for Torkham, one has heard of fish market but here it is truck market, all around heavy trucks with occasional sedans, on my inquiry that these have regular number plates I was informed that these are private taxis which ply between the Torkham and Peshawar. Reason for my inquisitiveness was the occasional glimpse of women inside the cars with partial veil; mystery was solved at Torkham.

## **Torkham**

The road opens up soon and there was a traffic jam mainly due to trucks yet the khassadars kept some kind of discipline better than many traffic wardens of many cities. These khassadar just cleared the road for us, there is a taxi stand, some shops, custom post..typical border post, people must walking , rush, noise, heat, dust, air conditioner was on in the vehicle , it also had a tinted shade but I do wave at the khassadar which they very fondly replied, the NATO vehicles onboard a trailer was too close to our small vehicle but we managed and finally entered the compound of our own.

Very unusual arrangement here at border, our complex is open, neat, well organized and well maintained, a monument without any inscription stood in centre with well painted slogans on all sides. The layout is that originally the Durand Line was straight at least here, it is a kind of narrow pass, with high ridge on south who has a water shed in the centre and that is the dividing line, however on ground the border has changed since Durand. In 1962 probably Pakistan & Afghanistan made a barter of land, Pakistan got area a mile inside Afghanistan at Torkham and Afghanistan got one post near Arandu in Chitral. Here on Afghan side there is no water and it is given by Pakistan, the Pakistani post at Torkham which now protrudes into Afghanistan is known as Ayub post after FM Ayub Khan the president of Pakistan at that time. It is so unusual, from our compound a stair leads towards the west around the compound, with an iron grill around it, as you climb up the stairs the area on left is all Afghanistan, thus the zero line remains there and yet you are moving into the Afghan territory in a curved manner and after a kilometre the Ayub Post is reached which is perched at the end of the ridge, I did not went to the post but appreciated the efforts of our leaders who got it. I had a full view of the Afghan territory, a board showing Karzai, Daud and Zahir Shah was there, a well painted fort was also visible, a flag of Afghanistan was fluttering. It is crowdy.

Border itself is nothing more than a chain which is raised at 2000 hours and down at 0600, the Afghan national Army troops wearing fatigue were manning there side, for pedestrians there is a side walk and everyone is checked by them and so is the case on our side where Khyber rifles do the same. I did not saw any lady police to search the women they are generally allowed to pass by with just a visual scan. There are old trolleys pushed by hand with a capacity of two or three adults in it, it is being used as taxi for crossing of border for sick and women. Women coming from Afghanistan are generally more liberal in looks, I could see the eyes and faces, even one was not having any veil just a chaddar wrapped around her. There were two who were wearing shuttle cock burqa of light blue colour . There are professional women also who usually ply for smuggling but this is where the khassadar comes into force they exactly know who has what intention. I was taking pictures but I came to know that afghans do not like their pictures being taken; everyone hates media. I was the odd man out with my dress but with FC I was giving the impression of an high official of Pakistan and it feels good. I sat with the khassadar , had a picture taken of them , and after some time we came back inside the compound. The habitat on the high ridge line is known as Killay and it has a history and story, General Zia have served in Khyber Rifles in 1954 , his handiwal a Shinwari approached him when Zia became



president and asked for electricity for his village , Zia not only provided electricity but also extended the road uptill his village. The Afghan side does not even have electricity rather they are on solar power, we are getting electricity from Peshawar through grid stations at Jamrud.

Had a lunch, subedar gave me some grapes in a bag and then after few pictures and lively talk we headed back through the same haze of traffic. Lot of trucks were standing for their turn of custom clearance, there are many cafes , for accommodation there are no hotels rather there are holes or caves in the adjoin hills which almost touches outer periphery of the Torkham, they are cold in summer thus drivers wait here. People comes from Jalalabad which is seventy odd kilometers away, Kabul is further 250 kilometers thus many Afghans prefer to have work, medical at Peshawar rather than at Kabul, thus a majority of them travel in private taxis from Torkham to Peshawar. Return journey was again interesting taking pictures and observing the railway tracks. Torkham is not more than ten miles away from Landi Kotal . On reaching Landi Kotal we stopped briefly at Landi Kotal railway station, for taking pictures I remained inside the vehicle and Hassan did the work. Soon khassadars came in , this is their beauty they reach the spot in minutes and invited us to tea but we just had a hand shake. There is a huge, large medical complex under construction at Landi Kotal , opposite the railway tracks work was going on, I saw board of lady doctors displayed on road as well.

### **Day Five.**

Same pattern but today I spent the day in the offices, sat with adjutant Major Nauman, Major Raza had gone to Peshawar along with the photographer Hassan. I was sitting in the adjutant office when I observed outside a group of men , I initially thought that they are from Mahsud drama party but they turned out to be real. These wee Zakkha Khel tribesmen keeping long hair and wearing the Chitrali cap a typical Taliban dress, adjutant went outside and had friendly talk with them , he ordered the tea bar to be opened for them and went to inform the commandant, I remain seated thee and soon all these Zakkha Khel entered the office, they wee taken back by my dress{trouser/safari shirt} and presence I rose and shook hands with them and they replied with little bewilderment. I know that they are feeling that I am an intelligence operator. I then left the office mainly because it had three chairs .

### **Day Six.**

Much ado nothing, went to office area, had cup of tea with adjutant and other officers , also had a chat with the subedar major, naib subedar Musa Khan Mehsud. Spent time in intelligence section going through the maps, commandant is still in Jarobi. Had a call from the Hussain Kuki Khel he is taking the pictures there. In the evening saw cricket match, Pakistan won it comfortably. In the evening I was invited on a ‘barra khanna’, in honour of Naib Subedar

Musa Khan, he is retiring I came to know almost at the end. I had a good chat with Musa talking about various headgears of tribes the colours of turbans, and so on. Musa was not wearing the Mehsud 's cap, I think even here the tribes are shy of wearing their own cultural dress but they certainly appreciate a talk on them. Oh yes since I had gone early there I had a round of station library , it was deserted but have good books, one good thing is that the local school students have regular periods here at library, otherwise I think it must have been years before any one drew a book. It is same here at Khyber Rifles too the mess library had no book issued in last four years and even the keys have been lost of shelves; they have to break the locks for me.

Dinner was ok, lot of mutton but not cooked properly, the issue with mutton or lamb is that it has to be served hot especially the lamb otherwise it is difficult to eat, I still remember Lt Col Tariq's bar b q at Tochi last eid it was the best I had in years, mainly because we all were sitting feet from the source and lamb fat is always good in winter. After dinner Lt Col Ijaz made a good speech in Urdu , a good speech is a rare thing , selection of words and so on. The issue with majority of Punjabi officers is their lack of appreciation for the tribal customs; I now believe that these junior commissioned officers should be treated with same courtesy in their mess as we do for officers. I can feel that these JCOs feel uncomfortable on any jokes cut in front of other qaums. Major Raza is a hard working and very courteous officer the most courteous one if I can add. The billiard room is undergoing renovation the experts have been brought from Peshawar for this purpose and they work till mid night so do i.

One joke which I would to add' Major General Fazl Ghafoor late, once was attending the darbar and on reaching the rostrum after the Moulvi has done the recitation , he asked the scouts present, can you hear me, ' meri awaz tu nahin phat rahi' and everyone replied in affirmative, and general replied ' magar Moulvi saab ki tu phatt rahi thi'.

Last night I went through the visitors book and found the remarks of very first two pilots of RAF who landed at Landi Kotal in 1918, then that of Young husband, Ross Keppel, Mountbatten and Mr Jinnah along with Liaqat Ali Khan. In another it was Bhutto, Fazl Ilahi Choudhary, Margret Thatcher but the best one is the page having President Zia's signature and that of a cadet GC Tariq of 64 long course on same page.

### **'Sur Lakki' The Khyber Rifles**

Khyber Rifles take their origin to the second Afghan War of 1879 when they were raised as Khyber Jazailchis with Major Nawab Aslam Khan as the first commandant. Khyber Pass itself came into limelight due to 1<sup>st</sup> Afghan War of 1839. The British East Indian troops did not marched through it rather they opted for the Kandahar {Bolan Pass} but their retreat and relief was through Khyber Pass and that is how Khyber Pass and Khyber Rifles became synonym .

Khyber Pass is the most natural way of movement between the Kabul-Peshawar-Lahore-Delhi and onwards to Calcutta in east and towards the central Asia on west. Pass itself starts almost ten miles west of Peshawar with Jamrud as the base town and then gradual climb with a swindling track {presently FWO is constructing road which is built till Ali Masjid}. Population is thin on both sides of road, barren void of water and generally dry. The present day road journey despite the under construction road does not take more than an hour. The ever present long Mercedes trailers coming from Kabul carrying goods and military hardware of NATO, non custom paid vehicles, and many other vehicles keep it busy from sunrise to sunset.

Since 1836 when the Sikhs were defeated at Ali Masjid till now the landmarks all along the track have hardly altered with the exception of two, one the house or killa of Haji Ayub Afridi who was once rated as the most honest and hospitable drug smuggler of his time, he also had the distinction of firing a shot at Nehru during his speech at Peshawar in 1946; Ayub was a khassadar then. Other is the Miri Mosque where a blast in 2009 killed over 92 tribesmen, mosque has been built new. The other landmark is Ali Masjid, the tradition goes that Hazrat Ali came here and built a mosque, opposite the mosque is a huge boulder believed to be thrown by Hazrat Ali; yet the population is entirely composed of Sunni faith.

**Khyber Rifles** history dates back to second Afghan war {1878} when in the aftermath of the campaign the present day Khyber rifle was raised as an irregular Khyber Jezailchis {Jezail stands for local manufactured rifle}. Comprising of two companies in which one was composed of Malik din Khel Afridi and other from Zakkha Khel. The Rifles itself draws its name from the famous pass and since its inception it has remained here thus the history of the Rifles is in fact the history of the pass, history of the tribes inhabiting it and the international relations between the British India and the Afghanistan as part of Great Game.

The Khyber pass has a history of its own and it is the most famous of all the passes that leads to Indus Valley from the highlands of Central Asia; it is the gateway to the India and present day Pakistan. In old time the word Indai was mainly used for the Indus Valley, Persians called it India, the natives called it as Sindhu {Sanskrit}. Indus valley was under the Persian control from 500 BC, it was one of the twenty satrapies of Darius and the Taxila was the most rich among all these, other being the present day Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Baluchistan, Kafiristan to name a few. There is no record of the past available in India when it is compared with other old civilizations of Egypt and China. Rig Veda is an oral history which narrates the history of Aryans, who migrated from the highlands towards the plains as part of historical current, in search of better dwellings, they logically followed the water channels leading east which includes River Gilgit in the north north west followed by River Kabul, River Tochi and River Zhob all thus acting as passes. Apart from these water passes the other passes that connect the west-east are Mintaka, Broghul, Nawagai, Khyber, Tirah, Kurram to name a few, but none has attained the glamour, charisma, romance, importance and convulsion as Khyber gained. India's history in a sense starts with Herodotus's Historia in which he mentioned the social life pattern of Indus, but the fact is that he never came physically towards this part thus his all accounts are based upon

secondry sources. There is always a watermark in the history and to a great extent our history starts with the Alexander the Great's invasion of India in 323 BC for the reason that he brought along with him a batch of historians to record the events but unfortunately nothing has even survived of that in true sense. It was Arrian who almost three hundred years after Alexander's death wrote the history of his sojourn in India{70AD} thus even Arrian account cannot be taken with full authenticity. India after Alexander's retreat was divided among his generals with three major centres of importance emerging namely the Kabul in West, Taxila in the centre and Magadha in the east on Ganges, other important towns like Multan in south on Chenab and Peshawar on Kabul river in north assumed greater importance due to the east-west movement; for the purpose of Khyber rifles we are more concerned with area west of Indus thus Peshawar is the key town.

Islam took birth in 570 AD at Arabia and within a short span of time it changed the history of present day Iran, Afghanistan, central Asia and India. By 712 AD when Islamic forces were knocking on the doors of India, the first major onslaught came from south through the sea and land adjoining it in a easterly direction from Iran and after defeating the Hindu Raja close to the ancient town of Moenjodaro it halted at Multan. On the north the Islamic forces defeated the joint military joint of Turk and Chinese in 751 AD. Turk was a word which the Arabs used for all nomadic tribes of central Asia; with this battle the Chinese and Turk empires not only were crushed but they embraced Islam especially the Turks in essence and that had a profound impact on the Khyber Pass and other tribes.

Tribes living astride the Hindu Kush are descendants of the same Aryan stock which migrated from the central Asia and many kept on moving towards the east of Indus and adopted agricultural life style and other preferred to live astride the river banks and passes. They all are invariably interlink with each other in one way or the other, with minor difference of origin. The name Khyber thus has its history interlink with the early days of Islam. Battle of Khyber near Medina is one of the most famous ghazwa of that era and Hazrat Khalid bin Walid stands out as the most coveted and successful general of Islam. The oral native history thus claims to have a direct link with these two names, they accepted Islam on the hands of Khalid bin Walid and that is how the name Khyber was adopted. In another such local oral history the famous Ali Masjid which is the narrowest part of the pass is named after the conqueror of Khyber of Medina Hazrat Ali, the mosque is named after him. On the other hand it is very much logical to assume that Islam spread with the conversion of Turks into this area. No Islamic army came through this pass.

By the end of first millennium the area astride Indus as far as Kabul was in an anarchy with no single power having authority, Hindu Rajas were in control of Kabul, Peshawar, and Bannu rather the upper districts were under their sway. The tide turned when the Turks after embracing Islam established the Muslim state at Ghazna and soon they defeated the Hindu Rajas and when the Great Mahmood of Ghazna ascended the throne he practically reduced the whole of India as vassal state of Ghazna by carrying out no less than a dozen expeditions to destroy the

idol worshipping centres of somnath. It must be kept in mind that the majority of the troops of mahmood came from the valleys adjoining the Ghazna in Tochi, Kurram , Zhob to name few. Ghazna is south of Kabul or Khyber Pass thus Khyber remained in oblivion. An Islamic state was established in India with capital at Delhi under the Turk sultans; the real history of kybber starts from now. For next three centuries the invaders like Chengiz Khan and Tamerlane passes through this range and pass and finally it was Babur of Ferghana who in 15<sup>th</sup> century crossed the pass and established the Mughul rule in India. Babur and his desendents have one unique quality they all almost wrote autobiography and biography which sheds light on the history of this pass. Mughul rule had its roots in central asia and thus pass became important, many attempts were made to have it properly secure under its control but they all partially succeeded, insurgency and rebellions were faced by them and till the end of this empire in 18<sup>th</sup> century the tussle continued. It was Akbar the Great's enginner Qasim Kjan whio is attributed with constructing the road on Khyber which was fit enough for vehicular traffic in 1581.

From 1739 invasion of India was carried out by Persian Nadir Shah who naturally adopted the southern passes of Kandahar but decided to move westward after ravaging Delhi through the Khyber pass , he met stiff resistance in the pass.and subsequent rule of ahmed Shah Abdalli the Kabul had its authority extended till the Sutlej River having Peshawar, Lahore, Kashmir and Multan under its control . From 1800 onwards till 1849 the Sikhs under maharaja Ranjeet Singh created a Sikh empire in Lahore which expanded west ward. It was at this critical juncture that the British interest in nthe Khyber Pass took birth.

British East India Company{BEIC} a commercial venture were initially content with the dominion in the east but the threat of napoleon in 1800 onwards compelled them to plunge into the western affairs, treaty with Persians in 1805 and then the Russian invasion's fear forced them to have a puppet regime in Kabul and this is how the First Afghan War in 1838 satttrted which was mainly to restore Heart to the loyal Shah Shuja of Kabul. They opted to have the forces marched towards the south of Afgghnaistan from the southern most pass of India the Bolan. The expedition succeded in its mission and a regency was established in Kabul but all hell broke loose in 1842 when the regency was attacked, burnt nad almost all the members of British contingent were massacred with the sole exception of Dr Brydon who was able to drag himself into the Jelalabad garrison manned by British troops while coming back from Kabul; Khyber in trure sense now became the life savior blood line for the British and Khyber Pass was the key . before venturing into the history from this point onward it is pertinent to have a look at the Khyber p[ass geography and demography.

## **Khyber Pass**

Physically the pass has a length of 33 miles extending from Jamrud which is eight miles west of Peshawar having an elevation of 1900 feet, traversing west ward through a gradual

ascend amidst barren and rocky mountains in a continuous slow and gradual climb passing through Shagai which is at 3000 feet elevation and then the narrowest part of pass at Ali masjid couple of miles west of Shagai, again opening up and reaching Landi kotal which is at 3500 feet and the highest point of the pass it is a plateau and from here a descent starts which takes a traveler down to Michni and into Landi Khanna which marks the culmination point of the pass ; eight miles west of Landi kotal.

Khyber Pass is inhabited by one major and most populous tribe the Afridis from Jamrud till Landi kotal , Landi kotal is the home of Shinwaris another pathan tribe which extends into Afghanistan. Afridis are restricted into the east of pass. Two minor tribes Shillman and Mullagori are also living north of the pass. The Kabul River marks the northern boundaries of the pass.

Pass itself can be classified into three main portions from east the initial part from Jamrud – Shagai with Baghiari defile overlooking the entrance it is known as lower Khyber , from shagai-Landi kotal is the central Khyber and then from Landi kotal –Landi khanna as the lower Khyber.

Geographically the northern area between the Kabul river when it enters into the plains of Peshawar till the southern part where it joins river Indus near Attock is a large curve , just like a moon in its mid phase. The southern part known as the Kohat {presently Khushal Bridge} moving west and northward it is inhabited by eight clans of Afridis. The mid point of this curve or moon is the Tirah Valley which is green and has an elevation of 6000 feet. This curve encompasses the valley of Bara River which has its origin in Tirah and logically even Peshawar is part of the Afridi clan as it falls west of River Kabul; therefore the east-west movement has to pass through this moon and there are two major passes the Tirah pass and Khyber Pass. Going through the pages of history one has recorded the countless invaders going through them, surprisingly there are no ancient ruins along the Kyber pass to validate this claim. At Landi Kotal which is the plateau , logic demands to have the ancient or even Mughul era structures in the form of fort and garrison but surprisingly there is no such landmarks left by the past rulers which by itself negates the very concept of this pass being the artery of past. If Mughuls can construct fort at Attock { } then sheer absence of such in the pass or even at the mouth of pass on both ends is highly conspicuous and open to debate, which will continue to remain in focus for times to come. There is only one ancient ruin between Ali Masjid and Landi kotal of a Buddhist Stupa which is 25 feet in height and still has certain marks of ancient language , the myth is that it was built during the reign of Asoka {310 -232 BC} but it has never been examined technically to have scientific evidence of its age, no ancient marks of civilization. One most logical answer is the absence of water on the western mouth of pass thus old caravans tend to follow the River Kabul to reach into Peshawar having water all along. Old historians and biographers have used a variety of words for the same pass thus it seems that when the word Khyber is used then it speaks of the area between the Landi khanna – Shillman on west and the ridge line from Jamrud-Shillman on the east.

Taking oral history as the yard stick the overall complex of history changes and one hears of fierce battles conducted at almost every stone of the pass. Among all the old names the name Kafir Kot stands out, it is the ridge which primarily runs south of the pass overlooking it till the Torkham. Its peaks do have strands of past, the name itself is linked with the Kafiristan, a province of Afghanistan in past now Nuristan but within Pakistan's Chitral district a tribe still exists having Kafiristan and known as kafir.

The pass and Afridis have become synonym to each other, Afridi is also an Aryan tribe, it has eight clans and among them following habitates Khyber and adjoining, Kuki Khel, Zakka Khel, Kambar Khel, Malik Din Khel, Sipah, Shalobar, Aka Khel. The other tribes of Khyber are Shinwari, Mullagori and Shilman but they are on the northern side and even among them only Shinwari are in great strength but still no match to Afridi. One thing in common among all of them is that they all are Muslims and practice Sunni fiqh.

## **Khyber Rifles**

Khyber Rifles{KR} has the oldest and one of the most chequered history among all the corps of Frontier Corps{FC}. They are the oldest component of FC, raised in 1879 as an irregular tribal force comprising of some 300 odd Afridi tribesmen with a single aim to keep the historic pass open year around and to ensure the safe passage of caravans and more importantly the British army for its subsequent operations against Afghanistan. When the occasion arrived in 1919 with the start of Third Afghan War the soldiers deserted en masse resulting in the disbandment of the corps. It was raised again in 1941 as Afridi Battalion and took part in the war mainly carrying out protective duties in the area. It was again disbanded in 1946 at Sialkot and Khyber Rifles were re-raised at the same station and stationed at their home town of Landi Kotal where they are present till now. It took part in the 1965 Pakistan-India war and was awarded a sitara-e-jurat, it had its share of action in the 1971 Pakistan-India war mainly on eastern front. Till the start of war against terror in 2001 it was mainly occupied in keeping peace on the border and quelling the odd miscreant in the agency; which had gained notoriety in drugs all over the world. However since 2005 when FC came under operational control of army the KR have been busy all over the tribal areas in hunting the terrorists in collaboration with other corps and army. In the process no less than sixty scouts have embraced shahadat and over two hundred have been injured.

Khyber Rifle's main fame is in its holding and guarding the historic pass Khyber, and being a host to a galaxy of native and foreign dignitaries who visit the pass they range from field marshalls, emperors, crown princes, queens, generals, admirals, sportsmen, actors, clergy, writers, premiers, presidents, air marshalls, politicians to name few. Other reason of such fame

It was in early 1881 that a full jirga of Afridi clan was held at Peshawar in which the independence of the tribe was recognized and allowances agreed {rupees 85,860 for the Khyber

afridis}, government to take the toll and clan to provide the force for maintaining order and peace on the pass<sup>10</sup>. This force was Khyber Jezailchi which comprised of native Khyber afridis and paid by the British. Khyber rifles initially had a strength of 400 footmen and 48 mounted on horse, later it increased to 550 in 1881, having one officer; sardar aslam Khan Saddozai, he in turn was under command of the political officer of Khyber rifles which for almost eighteen years was Colonel Warburton. Thus the first twenty years of Rifles history is a history of these two men who led, reorganize and expanded the Khyber Jezailchis. The natives used to call it Sur lakkai {red tail}<sup>11</sup> for the reason that the Jezailchis wore the native dress but as a mark of distinction they would put on a red cloth on their turban thus the nickname. In other words it was levies because they were not issued with any government rifles and only free action was admissible the pay being paid directly to the clans under silladari system.

The very first operation in which this outfit was employed was in Bazar area {Zakka Khel} and they did well. The role of them was more of a scout leading the way for the British regular army units and keeping the pass open mostly from their own clans. In 1890 the government in recognition of their service and as a mark of trust started issuing them the official rifles

**On 1<sup>st</sup> March 1946** the Khyber rifles were raised at Sialkot by disbanding the Afridi battalions, 'the parade was conducted and there were two sets of tables, the soldiers of Afridi battalion marched forward handed over their discharge papers and stepped back..made a salute and marched six steps forward to another table and picked his new papers of being enrolled in the Khyber Rifles'. On that day 1243 men were enrolled and all were Afridi. Their average height was 5.8 inches having a chest expansion of 32 inches-34 inches. Further more six hundred new recruits were also enrolled and another two hundred were inducted from the frontier Constabulary Tochi scouts, south Waziristan scouts. The very first commandant was Lieutenant Colonel J.R. Booth DS and Subedar Major Hamesh Gul Malik Din Afridi had the honour to be the first SM of the Khyber rifles; he had a short tenure and went on pension in October 1946 with an exemplary character. Other native officers as they were known included subedar Awaz Gul also MDK he went on pension in 1953, subedar Alim Khan again a MDK of Zangi village he retired in 1948. Subedar Major Azim Khan was then next SM at Bakka Khel he retired in 1961.

Second enrollment took place on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1946 in which men from other scout corps were also inducted they vary from Hayat Gul Kuki Khel he was just eighteen years of age he went on pension in 1952. Ramzan was also a Kuki Khel from Sperai Village he was recommended by his malik Safdar Khan. Zamfir was also in his teens just being seventeen he served for another seven years before retiring in 1950. Misam Khan son of Alam Shah a Kuki Khel was also seventeen and he soon deserted in 1948 with a rifle. All in all 1762 men were enrolled in Khyber rifles by the

<sup>10</sup> Colonel H.C. Wylie from the Black Mountain to Waziristan, first edition, 1912, reprint. Sang e Meel publishers, Lahore, 2003, pp-184-185.

<sup>11</sup> Colonel Sir George Warburton, eighteen years in the Khyber 1879-1898, first published 1900, reprint, Sang e Meel, 2007, p-94.



end of 1946. The procedure of enrollment was the same as in other Frontier corps one has to bring the surety of his malik for enrollment. Overwhelmingly all belong to Afridi or from Khyber. Saida Khan Shinwari was the very first from Shinwari qaum to be enrolled on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1946 he later on rose to the rank of subedar major before retiring with an exemplary character in 1960. Sepoy Khial Muhammad was from Zakka Khel tribe he had the regimental number of 1753, Sepoy member Kahn was from Aka Khel, Mirza Beg from Sipah, Sepoy Sadozai was from Kuki Khel, Sepoy Mashan Khan was from Mullagori, and his sons were Sepoy Amir Khan, Durr Khan, Babur Khan and Dabar Gul, these Mullagoris were all having an average age of over 25 years whereas the Afridis were in the bracket of 17-19. Mullagoris were in the average height of 5.5-5.7 inches. Sepoy Siraj Din was from Saghiri Khatatkhela class he was the eldest having a age of 30 years. Sepoy Umra Khan from Qambar Khel was seventeen at the time of enrollment. Almost all from Khyber agency area with exception such like Sepoy Said Hussain who was from Paarchinar, he was Duparzai, these Sepoys were enrolled into the companies with a clan composition for instance Mullagoris were in 3/12 company which means that the 12<sup>th</sup> platoon of 3<sup>rd</sup> company was composed of Mullagori, Qambar Khel were in the first company, Duparzai in headquarters company, Zakka Khel also had the second company for enrollment, Sepoy Gul Khamin Shilmani from Yangi village was mere 15 years old, he went on to serve till 1957. There were Yousafzais also but these were mostly old veterans who were put in the headquarters company like Havildar Muhammad Yousaf Yousafzai, he was 44 years of age. For special trades like armourer and black smith the Punjabi Muslims were also enrolled like Armourer Muhammad Sadiq he belonged to Akhnur. Shinwaris, Mullagori and Shilman had the average age of under seventeen at enrollment and major reason was that they were not previously enrolled in the Afridi battalions and under the new arising they got the opportunity thus they all were young blood. These young lads did serve for seven years when majority of them got discharged with good character certificates. On the eve of independence the strength was 1838 Sepoys.

There were two wings having eight companies and a headquarters wing. No 1 wing was being commanded by Major J. Letts. It was a blend of youth and experience. One key factor in enrollment and stay in Khyber rifle was the assessment of character in case the recruit fails to bring any evidence of being a sound character he was discharged, the bitter experience of 1919 was still fresh. For instance No. 1729 recruit Saidan Shahkuki Khel, 2/10 company was discharged on the last day of 1946 'unlikely to become efficient soldier. Medical grounds were another factor for retention in the Khyber rifles, Sepoy Azam Khan of 4/17 company was discharged also on the last day of 1946 on medical grounds. The last punishment of the year 1946 was given to the Sepoy Awal Shah for 'stealing government property' he was given 21 days rigorous punishment. The KR were stationed at Landi Kotal, there was an army brigade strength present at the station as well known as the field brigade Landi Kotal. Rifle .303 was the standard weapon and firing it without permission was an offence punishable with fines. The discipline and all other matters were conducted under the 1941 NWFC Law, the section 9{p} deals with the firing of weapon. All promotions in the corps especially that of officers and subedars apart from postings were published in the NWFP government gazette.

The Khyber rifles was deployed at landi Kotal being the headquartes with one wing at Ali Masjid & Shagai {No.2 wing under command Major M.C Smith} and other at Landi Kotal { No 1 wing Major J.Letts he was reverted back to military in March 1947 and was replaced by Major J.M.Penly}.

Muslims officers included captain Kaarmatullah followed by captain jaahngir Khan.The pioneer Indian officers{junior commissioned officers} of Khyber Rifles were Subeda sohbat Khan Kuki Khel, subedar Ziarat Khan Qambar Khel, subedar Aka Khel shah Sipah, subedar Haider Khan Qambar Khel, subedar sheikh Nur Malik din Khel, Subedar Hasham Ali Zakha Khel, Jemadar sadozai kuki khel, Jemadar Wazir Shilman,Jemadar Hussain Gul qambar Khel, Jemadar lal akbar qambar khel and Jemadar Khiamat Khan Kamrai. They were the nucleus around which the khybewr rifles took birth in 1946, they all underwent year of probation and they wee confirmed in their rank in March 1947. In the asme breadth thee we retirements also , Jemadar Bahadur Khan MDK and subedar fazl rahim were transferred to pension establishment in the spring of 1947. Probation period was strict and only the officers who passed the scrutiny were confirmed in the arnk and in other acse the period was extended in case there was any doubt in efficiency like Jemaadr payo Gul and alam sjhah had a extension of six months before they were confirmed in their ranks. Same holds true for havildars who also had to under go probation period of six months

1947. Year satartrted on a pleasant and promising start with commandant making promotion, four naiks were promoted havildar on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1947 with another four becoming naiks and three becoming lance naiks, further 33 were made lance naiks{ nine Mullagori,eight qamar Khel,four Zakka Khel,ten from Kuki Khel and three from Malik din Khel}. Promotion from sepoy to lance naik was based upon qaum; however demotion had nothing to do with qaum rather it was based on efficiency, as naik Ghundal khan Aka Khel learnt on 3<sup>rd</sup> January when he was reduced to the arnk of for inefficiency. Discipline was kept strict from the embryo stage, loss of empty case was a crime havinga punishment of rupee one as fine. When the pay ofa soldier was rupees 18 per month. There were frequent transfers from one wing to other from one compmany to the other. A sepoy had the choice to get his discharge by paying rupees 30/-; it depend upon service as well. Punishment and rewards were the pregotive of the commandant , a wing commander would recommend the soldiers for promotion, on the other hand he would also makea charge sheet for the commandant to award punishment. Absent without leave, over stay leave were the two most common features of soldiers getting punishment. Fourteen days rigourous imprisonment wasa normal sentence for over staying leavre even if it does not exceed three days in length. Clerks usually get away in such matters one they are educated anda s such knew how to manipulate the regulations but they had a sensitive work to perform , they wee paid a staff allowance of Rs 10/pm from regimental fund. Clerk syed Hussain and soldier Clerk Mahmud Khan wre the most efficient, Lala Sita ram was the head clerk. Rendering of the government issued items before the expiry of adte was another crime.loss of rifle component was

again fined with recovery made through the pay. These include even a small component such as screw band inner, nut screw protector or screw plate butt.

Drivers for arsh driving were charged and punished as well, driver payo shah was deprived of three months driver allowance in mid February 1947 for injuring a soldier of army at Peshawar in mid December 1946, Naik Abdul Majeed had to forfeit his two month driving allowance for arsh driving 'he drove a government truck in a negligent manner'.. Lance Naik Ati Khan forfeited three days pay for exceeding speed limit in Landi Koytal camp. Sepoy driver Zangir also had to forfeit his three days pay for driving on right of way without sufficient cause. The aim was to instill the traffic discipline and there is no better and more efficient way than inflicting financial loss. Even use of foul language or insulting manners by a sepoy or any junior to his senior was a charge sheet offense.

Even cooks were not saved from the discipline, loss of cooking utensils was a crime and punishable with fine, Jemadar Khaisat Gul and Sepoy Gul Zir were both fined rupees 2-11 each for the loss of one parat and one katora. Lance Naik Marjan was the nursing orderly, he lost one field dressing in last week of February 1947 and was fined 0-11-6 rupees. Breaking of a bulb was another crime punishable with fine, Sepoy Baidar Gul had never seen an electric bulb before and he hit it with a stone to see what is inside he had to pay Rs 2/12/- for the knowledge he gained. If a sentry failed to perform his duty then it was his guard commander who had to face the music, reduced to Naik. Lack of items at post was again the fault of post commander, e.g. Naik Gulistan at Fort Manda {No.1 wing} reprimanded 'an act prejudicial to good order and discipline, in that he as post commander did not ensure that the men of his post were in possession of oil bottles, pull throughs, and seals'. But the best is when Lance Naik Kaim Gul was in charge on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1947 the last day of Lieutenant Colonel's Booth's command 'an act prejudicial to good order & military discipline in that he was extremely idle on guard'; end result was 'deprived of his lance Naik rank'. Lieutenant Colonel Sharif maintained the same high standards of discipline, improper dress for guard duty, failing to report that the telephone at the post is out of order and to ensure that the sentry at his piquet is alert were the charges which resulted in severe reprimand for Havildar Sher Afzhan at Piquet 3040 on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1947, the very first day of Shariff's command. In another case a sentry was given seven days punishment that a while sentry {Sepoy Baz Gul} did not obey the guard's commander's order to stop talking to a passing civilian'.

A Subedar on promotion was put on a probation period of one year, a Naib Subedar was called a Jemadar and a Subedar as Subedar. Lieutenant {temporary Captain} K.D. Dhanoo was a jolly officer and he joined the Khyber Rifles in January 1947, Captain Karamatullah was the sole Muslim officer in Khyber Rifles till February 1947. In the absence of commandant the wing commander at Landi Kotal {Major J. Letts} used to perform as the commanding officer, note the difference. Good service pay an incentive for keeping the discipline intact it was Rupees three for a Havildar and rupees two for the Naik. Musketry prizes were meant for good firer, in very such event Havildar Jallat Khan scored 62 points in medium machine gun category, Naik Sherza Khan

had the first position in 1st Class with 45 points. Prize generally range between rupee one to two. Soldiers were granted two months leave and officers 28 days leave known as War leave within India.

Training of different trade was carried out rigorously, signalers were trained at Peshawar signals it included Morse Code reading, exchange operating, wireless procedures and radio telegraphy; they were judged as good, very good or very fair in each category, signal platoon commander was Jemadar Said Amir and he was authorized to draw a special allowance. Their examination included buzz reading, signaling, flag reading, Hail or lamp reading, cable jointing and cells primary.

Company weapon courses were attended at Infantry weapons wing, infantry school at Saugor. The students were graded in knowledge and in instructional ability, Jemadar Khialmat Shah and havildar Said Shah both attended the course and where as Khialmat was awarded above average grade, Said got average in knowledge and below average in instructional ability. Signal training was conducted at army signal school at Poona, a jemadar was authorized a batman in normal course of duty and also while on a course as well, it may come as surprise but it used to take only three days to move from Landi Nokotal and report at Poona. Arsenal stores were brought from Rawalpindi.

An educational establishment was started in April 1947, there were 15 soldiers who formed part of it headed by Jemadar Safdar Khan and Jemadar Gulab Khan they were given a staff allowance of Rs 10/- per month. Naik Makhmud Gul MDK, it thus ceased the pupil-teacher who thus ceased to draw their staff pay of Rs 5/-

The purchase of mules was conducted from Saharanpur where a party of no less than ten soldiers with a havildar would proceed for purchase from Remount Depot; it would take almost three weeks for the complete exercise. These mules were branded with letter K, Khyber Rifles had the mules having serial number from 800 onwards for instance No.K891 was a mare and K979 was a Gelding mule. Sick animals were treated and admitted at Peshawar veterinary hospital, a mule driver was always required to act as the attendant. In March 1947 mule driver stayed at Peshawar vet hospital with two sick donkeys for almost three weeks and it was counted as duty.

Ration was good and sufficient, soldiers were provided ration at reduced rates, in January 1947 the KR was providing ration at following rates. Atta 3 seers and two chhataks cost one rupee, in same amount a soldier could buy 12 chhataks of sarsoon oil, 11 seers of salt in one rupee, tea black loose was 3/5 per seer, Dal gran was costing 4 seers per single rupee rice was bit expensive as Daud Zai rice fetched only one seer and nine chhataks in one rupee, other quality of rice was known as hashtnagri, sugar and gur were almost being sold on same price 1 seer and 10 chhataks for sugar and only one chhatak less for gur. Milk was supplied by the contractor and also by the military adiry, contractor was supplying at a rate of -9/- per seer and military adiry

at -9/6, per seer . from april 1947 bLipton white label tea was issued to troops as part of artion in one pound packet, usual method was taht platoons would draw the tea and then use it collectively, one pound tea was good for 160 soldiers for a day i.e. one chattak per 20 men per day

Clerk shiva another Hindu , an efficient typist he wasw mainly responsible for typing the Part 2 orders and as such was always held in high esteem mby the soldiers. Kot or pay ahvildars were responsible for marinating the platoon messing in order. The wearing of equipment was in line with the south wazirsitan scvouts where the haversack was on left side and awter bottle on right side . from 1<sup>st</sup> march 1947 the men admitted in nhospitals were not allowed to ahve the ration and compensatory allowance for the period of stay in hospital. Venearl disease on detection rendered the effected person deprived of proficiency pay till he has been declared medical fit from infection, Sepoy payo Khan was the very first case detected in the corps , he had contacted the infection in October 1946 but was detected in March 1947.

There were few Hindus and Sikhs in Khyber rifles as well like Bhisti gulab singh, Ram Dass, sweeper walia ,Marai,Uda,Nawab and Peshawari, to name few all such trades including dhobi come under the S company. Even Muhammad ayub dhobi was struck off tyhe strength because he wasw unlikely to become an efficient dhobi wherea s Dhobi Zain gul was retained. There wee honoraray apponintents among the trades, these were purely for keeping discipline and had no effect in pay, only commandant was aurtherised to make such honoraray appointments, very first such honoray appoint holders includedLangri samandar as head langri, sher akbar as head khalasi, Head tailor Allah bakhsh, head Mochi Fazal Rakhman, Head carpenter Mohamamd Hussain, Mule driver saifed gul, bhisthi Ju Muhammad and Khalasi sher akbar were al made honoraray lance naiks.In june 1946 one silk bed sheet and one handkerchief was stolen from sikh Gurdwaar at Jamrud and Sepoy Lowar Khann was found guilty ; he had to undergo 28 days rigorous imprisonment for this folly.were stolen from

In April 1947 another batch of recruits were inducted and trained they all were from Khyber tribes mainly Mullagori and Kuki Khel Afridi. These recruits after enlistment were posted to the wings who were responsible for training which included mainly firing and drill.

Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad sheriff Khan MBE, took over the command of the Khyber Rifles on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1947, Khyber Rifles thus have the distinction of being the only Frontier Corps corps to have a native Muslim officer in command on independence . lieutenant Rahmat Ullah Durrani of FF Rifles joined Khyber Rifles on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1947

14<sup>th</sup> August 1947. It was a glorious day, sunny but windy, few clouds hovering over the Tantarra ridge, subedar major Azim Khan Qambar Khel and Jemadar Dilawar Khan Kuki Khel were made second lieutenants on this auspious day.

## **Khyber Rifles 1950s**

In July 1954 the class composition of the KR underwent a drastic change when eight platoons of Afridi replaced by the six platoons of Khattak which comprised of two platoons each of Akora, Seni and Barak and two platoons of Yousafzais, the latter were transferred from Zhb militia and former from south Waziristan Scouts. Thus the original composition of the corps being comprised exclusively of Khyber Agency tribes was altered, next year in August 1955 an additional but temporary increase of eight platoons along with two officers were sanctioned, this was exclusively for the Warsak Dam protection which was being constructed. These eight platoons had Orakzai & Bangash both sunnis {two platoons each}, Adam Khel Afridi's also had two platoons and Daur and Wazir one each; these platoons were newly raised where as others were transferred from Tochi Scouts and south Waziristan scouts. Daur were for the first time inducted in Frontier Corps, The overall strength of the corps thus reached an all time high of 9 officers, 58 JCOs, 101 havildars, 102 naiks and 1639 lance naiks and sepoy's there by making a grand total of 1909.

Major Zia Ul Haq. Later chief of army staff and president of Pakistan, reported at Khyber rifles in March 1954 from guides cavalry, he had served on temporary attachment with Tochi scouts also but now he was permanently posted, he commanded No.3 wing which mainly look after the Warsak Dam. His family also moved here at Landi Kotal. Major Zia was a popular officer mainly due to his good nature, humbleness and religious inclination and all these are the qualities most required in a scout along with good physical stamina and professional approach. He despite all his efforts could not master the Pashtu language but he understood it when others were speaking. A keen tennis player and always a volunteer for gashts. When General Zia became the president and he visited his old Rifles, his handiwal approached him and requested for the construction of a track till his village ..killay, General smilingly not only sanctioned a road as per his handiwal's desire but also made sure that electricity should also reach there. Present Charbagh road thus not only benefits the killi but the Khyber rifles Wing also gained immense advantage as it now linked it with main pass.

In 1957 the corps was being commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Serin Khan who later on not only became the Inspector General Frontier Corps but also had the distinction of becoming a three star general officer. As a commandant his contributions are many but compiling of the standing orders was a deep reaching act. Khyber Rifles was responsible for the protection of the international border {Durand line all along the Khyber Agency's limits, it was also responsible to guard and protect within the agency the lines of communication both rail and road, protection of Warsak Dam and other pumping stations and above all to assist the political administration in the maintenance of law and order.

### **Khyber – Chitral 4<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

I had no plan to leave Khyber all of a sudden, I wanted to stay nights at Ali Masjid and Jamrud fort, above all the atmosphere and environment are good, commandant Colonel Mansoor Janjua, Adjutant Major Naeem, Major Raza and DQ Major Habib, not to forget the Lieutenant colonel Ali and Mushtaq; but even then one starts feeling uncomfortable as one is not part of the organization. On the morning of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2013 I got a text message from Madam Carey Schoffield requesting me to be at Chitral for her school function. It was the most unexpected text message which I received and frankly I would have been less surprise had that message been from the presidency. There was no second thought, I mean how can you turn down such a lovely request. I confirmed it and later I thought how I am going to make it to Chitral in one day. Geography now started playing in reality, I can reach Chitral within a day provided if I travel on historical passage of following the Khyber pass and then turning left and going to Arandu via Kunar river pass but now they are closed and I have to follow the Peshawar-Malakand-Lowari onwards to Chitral. I narrated the whole episode to Colonel Janjua, he also knows the madam as she had visited his regiment {25 cavalry} in Kharian for the writing of the book. Luckily he was also going to Peshawar on 4<sup>th</sup> to attend the conference thus I made a plan to go with him till Peshawar. I had also made my mind to hire a taxi from Peshawar to Chitral. I informed the PC {person to contact} of Khyber Rifles at Hayatabad for this, he promptly confirmed the reservation rather he was intelligent enough to get the taxi to Hayatabad to save time. Fare was rupees 9500, which was ok, but the issue was that I had only twenty rupees in my pocket. I banked upon the banking machine for this.

Early in the morning I was ready, full of excitement and anxiety about the coming hours. Colonel Janjua was kind enough to present me with a shield and then we departed in the cavalcade. Khyber Pass now looks familiar after reading so much about the history, I was keen to see the Ali Masjid gorge the water points and so on. It was a warm day, dusty but the Khyber Rifle made their way through amaze of traffic holdups. These drivers are fascinating in nature and in skills, they drive fast and almost reckless but that seems to be the natural way of driving here in the pass. A normal scenery, trucks moving both way, cars, taxis and pick ups. School children and few ladies were seen on the roadside. Road construction is still going on which creates a mass of dust storms which chokes your nostrils. Took few snaps as well, Gul Hasan Kuki Khel was sitting in my vehicle and he helped me in this. Within an hour we were at Peshawar, I bid good bye to commandant and met the PC who was standing with the black Toyota taxi. Driver was not fluent with Urdu. First issue was to get the money from ATM at Askari Bank; it was here that I had the first of Murphy Law, the card was blocked by the machine but luckily the manager was in office and he retracted it and I had to change the pass word before I got the money, I drew 25000 rupees

### **Chapter III Chitral Scouts 1903-2013**

I have travelled twice to Chitral; one was in 1995 when I came alone from Multan on a fifteen days leave to travel from Peshawar to Gilgit via Chitral. It was October then and I took the last wagon from Peshawar city at around 1900 hours. It was journey mostly in darkness where I had no idea about the history or the geography through which I was passing by. We stopped short of Lowari top, there was a women also travelling and I was just inquisitive about her identity. In early morning hours we crossed the top and by morning we were in the Chitral. I had no idea about the town , one van took me to the Chitral Mess where I introduced myself and was given a room . I spent the night in the mess and next day travelled to the Kalash Valley as there seems to be no other purpose of coming to Chitral than to see these Kafir people. I had been reading the Kafiristan by Surgeon Marshall and as such had inkling about them. I stayed in a local hotel , bought the local wine and just sat outside drinking it and smoking hashish and enjoying the scenery and people. In this state I remained for hours and slowly and gradually I observed that I have lost that uniqueness which these people generally attach with the visitors; I was harmless person. There was a foreigner tourist group as well. They were a mix company mostly retired persons and they were travelling in the Central Asia on a bus.

I observe the local girls and was disappointed to see them wearing the standard Bata shoes , from this point onward they lost all of my inquisitiveness for me they have become commercial. I still recall that one family of two children and their mother sat almost whole day beside me in the open without any talk. I just played with the children and mother kept on doing some of her chores. I felt as if I belong to this place and this is my family. I visited the village , my mind was still thinking about the hidden valleys that lay beyond this Bhumbirit. After spending three nights I was back in Chitral from where after a day occupation I was on board a local jeep stacked with wood and reached Mastuj by last light. In the mess there was a visitor , a foreign military attaché I presumed and who was being given company by a Chitral Scouts officer. I learnt first time about the stone 'laid' and I did not went out to locate it but the military attaché did so. Lieutenant Colonel Murad Khan was a legend even then , he had recently committed suicide {1989} and as such none talked about him when inquired from waiters but in bazaar I did mentioned his name few times and every time the people response was positive.

The wing commander at Mastuj, I forgot his name was kind enough to accommodate me in his home and next morning after breakfast I just started walking towards the Shandur Pass. I also increased my knowledge by appreciating that the best apples are in Mastuj , one man rather the wing commander had told me while presenting some apples that even if you keep them in your luggage the aroma will stay for days.



Chitral , Dir, Swat, Amb, Kalat were princely states , there were very few such states which became part of Pakistan and where frontier Corps was employed or which became part of it thus it is pertinent to have a brief look at the overall political system of India. There are two terms , one India and other British India to denote the present day Pakistan, India and Bangladesh before 1947. British India encompasses all the area which was previously under the British east India Company and after 1857 came under the jurisdiction of queen Victoria and British parliament headed by Prime minister. The parliament appointed a viceroy normally for tenure of six-eight years. Within the cabinet there was a India office headed by a secretary of India , it was he who was answerable to the prime minister on India. It must be noted that for foreign affairs of Great Britain there was a foreign secretary also but he had no jurisdiction on India. In India the viceroy was the last word on all affairs, he had a commander in chief of army, a secretary of foreign affairs and other officials. India was divided administratively into Provinces which included Bombay{Sind was part of it} Bengal, United Provinces and after 1849 the Punjab; within which the NWFP was created in 1903 but it was not at par with other provinces as it was directly placed under the viceroy due to its strategic position.

Apart from provinces there were over 560 princely states of various size and population , the big states included Hyderabad Deccan , Jammu & Kashmir. Gwalior, Baroda to name few. British gradually moved westward and in this process certain states were annexed like Oudh in 1852 which became a province and many other were left at their own on certain conditions the paramount being , not to indulge or support anti British military campaigns. These states were ruled by princes, although all the states had different titles like raja, rao, nawab,thakur, nizam to name few but British all classified them as princes. Thus ‘ **British India**’ denotes the area which was under British administration in form of provinces and ‘**India**’ represents the princely states. 122 states were directly ruled by the central government from Calcutta {Delhi became capital after 1911} in other over 400 states there were political agents who were responsible to the provincial governors, commissioners and deputy commissioners. **Tribal Areas** were different from the other two misnomers of India and British India and they remained so till the last day of raj. These tribal areas mostly on western frontiers but also on eastern and northern frontiers were directly under the viceroy, the political agents were carefully selected and till 1930 all were British. The political agents were responsible to the foreign office of India. In case of NWFrontier the political agents communicated in the same pattern to the chief commissioner, the first governor of NWFrontier was appointed in 1935. Baluchistan itself was another adjoining political agency south of NWFrontier . The princes of these states were given subsidy and were allowed certain gun salutes depending upon their importance. Viceroy was authorized 1010 gun salute where as the Nizam of Deccan and maharaja of Kashmir were entitled 21 gun salutes most of the princes were entitled nine gun salutes. States were allowed to have a militia or army with British officers overlooking the affairs. Honorary ranks of lieutenant to general {very rarely} were bestowed upon the princes, states had their own flags and were not bound to follow the British legal system as enforced in British India rather own cultures were followed.

**Indian Army and British Army in India** also represent two different segments of the army. The regular British army regiments had a tenure of duty in India spanning over five to seven years, they had exclusive all British ranks.; they were known as British Army in India. The standard army which took its birth with the BEIC comprising of British Officers and native other ranks was known as Indian Army`. Native officers were given commissioned after First World War. Indian Army had its own commander in chief; there was some discrepancy among the allowances of both armies. It was in 1907 that a new corps

was raised known as frontier Corps mainly responsible for the Western Frontiers of India & British India. Ironically there were few princely states on the western frontiers they included Kashmir in the north followed by Nigar, Hunza, Tangrel, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Amb, Tank and Kalat in south. A new concept of military was introduced comprising of Militia, Levies, Scouts, Rifles, Border Military police supported by regular army.

Politically the administration was run on bureaucratic system with precise instructions and protocols to follow. The officers who were inducted in the district administration were either inducted directly through the competitions or from regular army; again either on recommendations or through examination. These officers were allowed to retain their army ranks and were also allowed to automatically enhance their prefixes of rank in accordance with the routine promotion of officers in army. Thus Major General Sikander Mirza one of the very first Indian to receive his commission from Sandhurst in 1920 was inducted in foreign service and posted as political agent when he was captain but despite remaining in civil service he still changed his rank when ever his seniority was promoted in army, he finally became a defence secretary of Pakistan in 1952 and then a governor general and finally he took oath as the first president of Pakistan in 1956. Suzerainty over British India & India from 1857 onwards rested with the crown Queen Victoria was proclaimed as Empress of India in 1876 followed by King – Emperor Edward VII, the title Emperor was meant for India.

Princely states were organized into presidency {Madras} Residency {Kashmir, Deccan} and agency. These state agencies dealt with the princely states, the North Western Frontier States Agency looked after the princely states on North western frontier, down below was the Baluchistan Agency which had the {Kalat, Kharan, Las Bela, Makran}. One distinct feature of this western frontier was the creation of political agencies on the same footing as for princely states to deal with the tribes, who hitherto never had any central authority to submit. Political agent in these tribal agencies had the same position as other political agents rather they were the pick of the pick, personally interviewed by the viceroy which mainly was in the form of the evening tea with viceroy and vicereine.

This whole composition and relation between the princes and suzerain remained as per royal protocol based upon century old customs. Ironically the layout of the states was such that British India did not have any direct contact with the Afghanistan, Iran and China. The tribes inhabiting these tracts were free men in every sense. They were not savage like the African tribes with whom the white men first had contact. The tribes on the eastern frontier were different in every sense from the western tribes separated by a thousand miles. The eastern frontier was jungle with Burma as the neighbor, weather tropical with torrential rainfall, swamps and weather based water channels, jungle full of wild life. How civilization penetrated is still a mystery as when they were discovered they were living and are still living in the old Dravidian jungle way of life. Humid weather gave them dark skin, short height, fragile body and a culture basing upon nudity. Burma was eventually annexed with British India after the Anglo-Burmese wars

**Chitral Scouts** were raised on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1903 at Drosh and on the eve of first Great War it had a strength of almost a thousand men organized into two wings. In 1942 it was named as Chitral State Scouts and came under the control of Frontier Corps, in 1953 it reverted to its old nomenclature. Chitral State Scouts played a key and vital role in the Kashmir Liberation of 1947-48. In June 1973 another wing was

raised. In June 1986 one more wing was added and next year in July two more wings and artillery battery were also added. It was raised at Chitral in 1903 but shifted to Drosh in 1926 and later move back to Chitral in 1992.

Chitral has a history, which is not yet fully understood, the state known, as Chitral is infact an amalgamation of many small fiefdoms, serfdoms and odd tribes most obvious being the Kafir. Chitral is infact a combination of two major rivers namely the TrichMir River and Yarkhun River; both meet just a mile upstream of present day airport and just miles away from the century old fort and the city itself. These two rivers express two distinct identities and cultures and it is only at Chitral that these two cultures join together.

Chitral is the gateway to Asian sub continent as no less than half a dozen passes all above 12000 feet opens into it from west and equal number are on east and few odd in south which allows any traveller from central Asia to enter it and then follow one of the river and exit it through the River Chitral into Afghanistan at Arandu; it is possible only through Arandu Pass that cultivation and fruits can be sent to Peshawar or Kabul from Chitral in a day and this is what makes Chitral special in relation to Afghanistan.

The two upper valleys which are separated by high mountains' as high as 18000 feet represent two distinct civilisations, the eastern or the right valley as seen from Chitral is known as Yarkhun Valley or Mastuj Valley, it leads towards the Wakhan strip and further towards Kashgir by going through the Broghul and darwaza pass 'door' and very rightly it is the door to sub continent . This valley or path also leads towards the Gilgit, Indus Valley and further into the Chinese Turkestan through the Leh and Kashmir. The TrichMir River Valley also known as Lotukh or Injigan leads towards the Badkhashan and further west towards the Aral sea. Now all this si seen from present but lets go back 5000 years ago and see how it looks then. The major evidence in hand is the geography which has remained unchanged in all these years , yes there are mountain landslides, there were earthquakes, floods but by and large TrichMir still stands as it was thousand years ago, other interesting evidence is the presence of idol Kafir tribe which is unique in a sense that it has been able to preserve its identity even today, they are not nomadic in nature but to some extent holds the key to past.

Aryan migration started in 2000-3000 years ago from Central Asian highlands which were climatically extreme in winter with little to grow moreover the builin natural instinct of human must have drove him downwards. We have only hypothesis but nothing concrete to proof like the Egyptians and Mesopotamian or Chinese civilisations, but one thing is common that civilisation took birth on the banks of river and in the lap of mountains ; thus there is nothing abnormal to write that the early civilisation took birth at the TrichMir and from there it moved down ward and towards the west. Mountains have a charm of themselves and in all our mythology world over it has been the mountains which remained the abode of god, let it not be forgotten that Moses went up the Mount Sinai to have the commandments.

**Chitral Scouts** have quite a few distinctive marks for once they do not speak Pashtu secondly they are from a settled district which has been a princely state in the past and above all they all are from one qaum. There are other cultural features as well , geographically they remained cut off from rest of the country during winter months ,; their only access via Afghanistan . not long ago Toyota Hiace used to ply between the Peshawar and Chitral during winter through Jalalabad into Asmar then into Arandu Valley in

Pakistan by passing Lowari and straight to the Chitral. Lowari tunnel is still not open for public use but in winter traffic is allowed thus a millennium old issue has been resolved. Lowari Tunnel project was initiated by the Prime Minister Zulfikar Bhutto in 1973 and completed by President Musharraf in 2007; thus these two personalities and parties have a sway over the people. Chitral is the northernmost and not surprisingly one of the most liberal district of Pakistan ; mainly due to geographic isolation.

**Chitral** has another unique feature the presence of 3000 odd Kafir tribes among over whelming peaceful Muslims; there are no Christians and neither any church in Chitral, the last church on Peshawar – Chitral track is at Mardan in south and none knows about any other in the north for another thousand miles. The Kafir tribe is settled in the lower Chitral on the western bank of Chitral River scattered in three valleys namely the Rumbir, Birir and Bhumbirit . Physically Chitral is the largest district of Pakistan in terms of area, the highest peak of Chitral is Trich Mir which is 25679 feet high and is almost in the upper left of the District. Chitral is like many other mountainous towns, a river passing through it , green valley, houses on the top and peace. Unlike Tochi Valley it is much more green and wide with higher peaks. As compare to the Kurram Valley it is narrower with more steep banks and field elevations. Gilgit and Chitral seems to be identical in nature and their history is also similar in pattern. It is the presence of colourful Kafirs which gives Chitral its unique flavor of history.

**Chitral** covers an area of 5000 square miles and have a population of 315,000 in 2001. In 1895 the population was under 1,00,000 humans, in 1947 it was 1,14,000 and 1,50,000 in 1961. Chitral is a confluence of two valleys , the western being a Trich Mir and the eastern valley runs a distance of 250 miles starting from Sor Yarkun near Oxus few miles east of Broghul in the north , this valley is known as Yarkhun Valley and have Mastuj as the major town. These two valleys and rivers join each other few miles upstream of present airport. From here onwards it is known as Chitral river and runs down to the south in a winding but plain area to the Arandu in the south west, Chitral attained the status of a settled district in 1969, it is divided into two administrative layers, the upper Chitral is known as Mastuj sub division and comprise of three tehsils namely Mastuj, Torkhow and Mulkhaw with Buni as the headquarters, Chitral sub division comprises of Chitral, Drosh and Lotkow tehsils. History of the Chitral Scouts is mainly spread in the lower Chitral areas.

### **Early History**

Not much is known about Chitral's early history, it is not mentioned by Herodotus or by the Alexander The Great's historians. Although it seems quite logical basing upon the history to assume that some troops of him must have intruded into the Chitral Valley as no less than 19 passes were available to the troops of Alexander. The Kafirs of Hindukush are the only physical evidence of Chitral's past. Kafirs have two categories, one is known as the Red Kafirs or the Broghul other as the Kalash or the Black Kafirs; it was the Red who were believed to be the masters. Chitral is the first of the many valleys or waterways which the Aryans adopted for their migration downwards. The beauty, serenity, peace and above all the abundance of fresh water all along must have been very tempting for them to settled astride the water flow. Chitral's history is interwoven with other mountainous states likes Gilgit, Dir, Hunza and Swat. Being on the edge of all of them it attained a greater strategic significance. It is the door way to the Central Asia or vice versa a route to the plains. On the north it is bounded by Oxus or the Wakhan, on the west by Gilgit, Yasin and Ishkoman mountainous states, on the south by Dir and Swat and in the south west by the Afghan province of Asmar and Nuristan.

TirchMir was the mountain god standing majestically at the west of Chitral, the early morning sun rays cast an golden radiant around it and at sunset the crimson color bids farewell to the day journey. Like all other mountains the Aryans worshipped mountains, they were remote , inaccessible yet visible with efforts. Clouds generated around them bringing rain and darkness. At night these clouds would wrap the full moon around its web creating myths and fables; TirchMir is no exception rather it is among those very rare mountains along with Rakaposhi and NangaParbat to have fertile valley running around them. Even among these Tirch Mir stands out as it is more fertile , plain and green in nature. West of Chitral town a couple of miles up stream is the confluence of two rivers which are also two distinct paths of history. The eastern river leads to further north into Wakhan , Hunza, Gilgit, Sinkiang, Kashgar and into China { or towards the Rakaposhi, K-2 , }, where as the western or TirchMir river leads into Afghanistan. Alexander the Great came down towards Indus from the Oxus marching along the fringes of Tirch Mir and there is no reason to doubt that he did not cross into the Tirch Mir River and following River Chitral and later Kunar passed through the Arandu into Bajaur.

Before the arrival of Islam the TrichMir kingdom was under the suzerainty of King of Kabul, Raja Jaipal. It was a Hindu kingdom , Hinduism itself cannot be expressed in the same language as one can use for Christianity ; it si a conglomeration of over five hundred different sects ranging from worshippers of Shiva to the Hanuman. Chitral was one of the finest among such fanatics. Kafirs even at present performs the rituals of social life which are so alien to the civilization even then. They do not bury their dead rather leave them in a wooden casket under a tree. The present grave yard's pine trees are centuries old and wooden casket also of same age with bones visible of recent entrants. The marriage another social indicator of humanity is different too, every village had a male bull responsible for continuity of race. This concept is much closer to the Spartans concept of ideal warriors however here the intention and application seems to be different in the absence of any military laurels. Chitral remained as popular spot for flesh market as Badakhan across the valley in Afghanistan was famous for its horses. That can be one explanation of such a variety of languages as caravans moving west towards the Kashmir preferred crossing it through Arandu thus having only one river to cross instead of two if they choose any pass west of Chitral. Kafirs have one major mystery among there culture, their colourful dress and cap which is part of attire have sea shells and the pattern of the dress is have marked similarity with the tribes of Burma and Thailand especially the mountain tribes of Chiang Mai. There is one theory that these kafirs came from the east rather than the lost descendents of Greek troops. But by and large Chitral remained hidden in history and present hypothesis about its history are based upon geography which ahs remained intact in all these millieniums. The visible, living, strong and alien cultural fragments thus naturally brew theories.

**Islam** came to the Chitral or Khowistan in the aftermath of the Chinese Turk army defeat in the hands of Arabs in 751 AD. Chitral then was ruled by the Sia Posh or Black Kafirs. The upper valleys or Upper Chitral was divided into many smaller Khowistan, Torkhow the upper Khow, Mulkhow the lower Khow these names persists even today. Buddhism had its impact in the area with one odd inscription of 9<sup>th</sup> Century AD records the fact that the area is under King Jaipal of Kabul. Khowar language has quite a number of words from Sanskrit in it. One stupa of Buddha is still intact at Torkhow known as Kalandar-i-Bhuttani , {mendicant of stone}. Broghul Pas has been the main entry route of Mongols and tartars in the past. Marco Polo referred to the country as Bolor which included Gilgit as well. Another strand of history recalls a Chinese tribe by the name of Yarkhun to have invaded the area.

**Khovar** is the language of Chitral River from snout till Mirkani in the south with varying dialect, in its pure form it is being spoken in the upper Chitral in Mulkhow and Torkhow area; ironically it does not have any written characters thus Persian remained the official language since early days later replaced by Urdu and English. Khovar is like Urdu because it is also a combination of Persian, Turkish and Sanskrit language. Till mid seventies a journal in Khovar language was monthly published by the Government of Pakistan to promote the language. In Lotkow, Madaglasht and Kalashgum the dialect is different. Persian is still spoken and understood by the aristocracy in the Madaglasht in the Shishikuh Valley, Yudgah is spoken in upper Lotkow Valley above Parabek, Dangarik or Palola is spoken in Ashret, Kalkatak, Beroi and Nastiwar or Gawarbat is the language of Arandu. These varieties of language when seen in the context of the Waziristan which has much more area but only two dialect reinforces the theory that Chitral has been abode of many races and cultures which with the passage of time adopted a working pattern rather amicably. The abundance of fresh water and green pastures all along the various streams provided a solid logic against the utter use of violence for the land as observe in the Waziristan.

**By 10<sup>th</sup> century AD** the area was ruled by the Kafirs however Mahmud of Ghazna's rise and his utter destruction of idols in the India must have been the cause of the downfall of kafirs and slowly but gradually they started getting into the small valleys. Tamerlane's conquest of India and his slaughter of Hindus was the last of the nails in the kafir culture. The area however retained its identity as it even today is known as Kafiristan although the major portion which lies in Afghanistan is now known as Nuristan. In 16<sup>th</sup> century the Chitral river banks were under the control of Mughuls with Sah Rais on the throne. His advisor was Sangin Ali an Persian, with the passage of time the family of Sangin Ali came into power and remained so till to date. Within the family there are lineages the Katoras take their name from the Sangin Ali's grandson where as the Khushwaqt take it from the second son.

**Present History** of Chitral begins in 1819 when Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured Kashmir and handed it over to the Dogras as a reward and later British after the defeat of Khalsa in the Anglo-Sikh wars of 1842-1848 sold it to the same Dogra family. Kashmir under the Ghulab Singh expanded outwards to the territories hence alien to the natives of India. They moved east ward towards the Tibet, northwards towards the Laddakh and west wards towards the Gilgit across the river Indus. This was the first and till to date the last invading force crossing Indus into Karakoram mountain range. By 1842 Kashmir durbar had a foothold at Gilgit and became the king makers, a garrison were established at Gilgit as well. The extreme northern states like Hunza and Nagar remained free from these incursions. In the present day Swat there was no state rather a loose conglomeration of khanates like Tanger, Darrel which were rather big in size and located on the eastern banks of River Indus. Kabul was the other major stake holder having a claim to the area of Kashmir as well, thus these small mountainous hamlet states became a battle prize among these two predominant states. Sikhs were religiously tolerant of Muslims and they had the big advantage in having a beard and a turban as part of religion both these items are integral part of western bank of River Indus's cultural and religion.

**After the annexation of Punjab** in 1849 by the British East India Company {BEIC}, Chitral at that time was ruled by the Mehtar, there were two distinct families based upon geography who were the ruling elite, the Khuswaqts in the upper Chitral with stronghold at Mastuj and the Kators who were living in the lower Chitral. It was a classical narrative as both had the common blood running in their veins but both trying to extend their hold. Numerous small principalities in the small valleys put their weight behind each family basing upon their chances of success. Murder was common feature to grab the power.

Maharaja of Kashmir made a move and had an alliance with the Kator Shah Afzal Mehtar of Chitral against the Khuswaqts of Mastuj who were attempting to attack Gilgit with the aid of Yasin's ruler. This was the start of Kashmir getting involved into the Chitral affairs. In 1855 for a short period Chitralis occupied Mastuj but were driven out. The Khuswaqts of Mastuj had Gilgit under their control from 1848 till 1860 when Sikhs got it back after the death of Khushwaqt. On the other hand Shah Afzal Kator died in 1856 and after an intriguing episode his son Aman Ul Mulk became the Mehtar in 1857 and ruled till 1892. He is the father of modern day Chitral. He tried to unite the upper and lower Chitral, expanded his territory which included Gilgit, Ghizar & Thui and Chiga Sarai in present day Afghanistan. Khuswaqts led by Pahlwan made a venture to capture Gilgit in 1880 but in his absence Aman Ul Mulk captured Mastuj and that ends the story of Khuswaqts.

Aman Ul Mulk more importantly opened up the country for the British. In 1885 the need to understand the western approaches to India were felt. The threat of Russia making an incursion through the Broghul Pass was a distant reality. An army team led by Colonel Lockhart visited Chitral and met Mehtar Aman Ul Mulk.

**British in North.** British venture into the north started in 1830 when travelers and foreign department officers disguised as saints and travelers gathered knowledge about the remote north. Names like George Hayward who was murdered in 1870 at Darkot, Mason, Burnes of Bukhara and later George Robertson who was the first British to live in kafir territory made headlines. Britain established an agency at Gilgit in 1880 with Colonel Biddulph as the political agent but it was short lived. In 1892 the Gilgit Agency was again established which also monitored the affairs in Chitral. Chitral after Colonel Lockhart was visited by Colonel Algernon Durand in 1888 and 1889. Chitral or more precisely Aman Ul Mulk played power politics, in the past Chitral had been a subject of Badakshan in a nominal manner and now Kabul asserted the same pressure. Mehtar tried to have a betrothal with Kabul but it did not take place, on the other hand when Mehtar felt threatened from Kabul he made an overture towards Kashmir in 1874 which resulted in a kind of pact between two states linking the defence of Chitral with Kashmir; British were the referee; in the end Chitral came under British sphere of influence and this became a bone of contention between the Kabul and Calcutta.

1891 was another watershed year in the history of northern areas. The Nilt and Hunza valley rulers became embroiled in a clash with the British led by Colonel Durand with British and Kashmir troops under his command. In December the forts at Nilt were overcome after great dexterity shown by the troops. Chitral remained neutral in this affair; Gilgit Scouts took birth after this expedition and a permanent agency was established at Gilgit with political agent in charge. It must be kept in mind that agency was established at Gilgit but it still remained under the Kashmir control it was only in 1936 that the agency was leased by the British from Kashmir.

**Durand Line & Siege of Chitral - 1895.** In 1893 the agreement was signed by the Afghanistan and British India to have a demarcation of their respective international boundaries which for the first time were established as well. The tribes' interpretation of the agreement was based upon the hypothesis that British are intent to wipe out their culture and religion and this soon became a mind set which was fanned by the Afghanistan obviously.

Chitral differs from other parts of Durand Line in a manner because the River Chitral after traversing the territory again falls back to the Afghanistan, there are 29 passes that led to Chitral from Afghanistan starting from Darwaza Pass in the north to the Arandu or Aranwali in the south. Trouble initially started with the demarcation at Asmar within Afghanistan . Umra Khan of Jandol was another key player he was the son in law of Aman ul Mulk, pathan by race he was the chief khan of Lowari Pass. After Aman's death the bloody intrigues for the Mehtarship started among the various sons of late Aman ul Mulk {he had eighteen sons} finally it was the British weight which made Afzal Ul Mulk triumphant, it was short lived as Kabul back Sher Afzal soon took the reins after bloody coup. British now backed Nizam Ul Mulk another son of late Aman ul Mulk this resulted in Sher Afzal leaving the area as he entered through **Doeah** pass back into Afghanistan. A British agent George Robertson was stationed at Chitral. He started his move in **January 1893** towards the Chitral from Gilgit with 50 men of 15<sup>th</sup> Sikh Battalion, Captain Young husband a famous traveler was his assistant along with Lieutenant Gordon and Bruce. A native by the name Abdul Hakim also accompanied the Robertson. He arrived at Chitral and established himself, he was now the British representative and his main task was to act as a listening post of on the northern gates of India.

### **Chitral Siege – 1895**

The classic act of frontier romance, an mountainous kingdom besieged by the wicked ruler and tribes and held out by a brave and loyal force of natives led by British officers, few casualties , no major clash or massive bloodbath. It was after 1857 that the act of Lucknow Residency was reenacted with a happy ending, that is how Chitral Siege has gone down in the frontier history. It was different from Hunza & Nagar campaign as no Victoria Cross was awarded . It had a strategic implication had the Umra Kahn of Jandol the most able and famous of the Pathan Khans been successful in his campaign to have Chitral under his influence then the British would have received a serious dent in the Forward policy. The British officers and their escort were threatened and they timely got behind the safety of the fort. Meanwhile Umra Khan, Sher afzal and Mehtar were all gathered around the fort. The fort held out for well over a month under persistent dangers waiting for relief. The relief forces came from Gilgit and Peshawar.

**Chitral State** was part of Dir, Swat & Chitral Agency which comprised of vast territory of Hindukush and the border of Peshawar District and thus taken as agency of Peshawar.

In the aftermath of Chitral Siege of 1895, a new political agency was formed known as , Dir & Swat political agency with its headquarters at Malakand, Chitral was added to it a year later in 1896. Thus an assistant political officer used to manage the affairs of the Chitral; before this it was the political agency of Gilgit which was looking after the British interest in the state. It should be kept in mind that in 1891 under the Mehtar Amin ul Mulk the Chitral had agreed to hand over its foreign affairs mainly the relationship with the Afghanistan to the British.

The **Chitral Levies** were raised in 1897 by the assistant political agent at Chitral; it was his personal escort and force to implement the orders, it had a strength of 100 men . Mehtar had his own bodyguards numbering over 2000 and there was no regular army of Mehtar; there was one British army unit along with two guns which was stationed at Chitral. They had built a new fort a mile west and up of old fort which was besieged. Chitral levies thus perform the duties of border military police as well.



Border military police was a system organized initially by the British after the annexation of Punjab in which originally the local tribesmen were task to perform the duty of manning the border with the tribes and mainly to stop their wrath in their own area. It was run on silladari system under which the local headmen produce the manpower and horses and get the pay as well; it was later abolished and the same tribesmen were paid directly by the state,. A assistant deputy commissioner in each district except Kohat was the head of this police. By 1903 it had 2300 strength.

British garrison which was stationed at the Chitral amounted to two infantry regiments, , one company of miners and sappers, one section of two guns. A line of communication was opened from Mardan through Malakand, Chakdara, Dir via Lowari to Drosh ; it was the responsibility of Khan of Dir to keep it open in his area for which he was given subsidy as well. Dir Levies were raised in 1897 for this purpose they were under command of the Khan of Dir. Similarly levies were also raised at Malakand known as Malakand Levies. This garrison was annually relieved utilizing this route. It was only in 1936 that the first ever relief using motor vehicles was utilized, the road from Chakdara was vastly improved by then still Lowari had to be crossed on foot. RAF from 1929 onwards started providing air lift and in 1937 an aerial relief was carried out in the winter when passes remained close. Chitral Levies initially had to look after the three post namely Ziarat, Mirkani and Arandu

## Princely States of India

Chitral , Dir, Swat, Amb, Kalat were princely states , there were very few such states which became part of Pakistan and where frontier Corps was employed or which became part of it thus it is pertinent to have a brief look at the overall political system of India. There are two terms , one India and other British India to denote the present day Pakistan, India and Bangladesh before 1947. British India encompasses all the area which was previously under the British east India Company and after 1857 came under the jurisdiction of queen Victoria and British parliament headed by Prime minister. The parliament appointed a viceroy normally for tenure of six-eight years. Within the cabinet there was a India office headed by a secretary of India , it was he who was answerable to the prime minster on India. It must be noted that for foreign affairs of Great Britain there was a foreign secretary also but he had no jurisdiction on India. In India the viceroy was the last word on all affairs, he had a commander in chief of army, a secretary of foreign affairs and other officials. India was divided administratively into Provinces which included Bombay{Sind was part of it} Bengal, United Provinces and after 1849 the Punjab; within which the NWFP was created in 1903 but it was not at par with other provinces as it was directly placed under the viceroy due to its strategic position.

Apart from provinces there were over 560 princely states of various size and population , the big states included Hyderabad Deccan , Jammu & Kashmir. Gwalior, Baroda to name few. British gradually moved westward and in this process certain states were annexed like Oudh in 1852 which became a province and many other were left at their own on certain conditions the paramount being , not to indulge or support anti British military campaigns. These stes were ruled by princes, although all the staes had different titles like raja, rao, nawab,thakur, nizam to name few but British all classified them as princes. Thus ‘ **Britsih India**’ denotes the area which was under British administration in form of provinces and ‘**India**’ represents the princely states. 122 states were directly ruled by the central government from Calcutta {Delhi became capital after 1911} in other over 400 states there were political agents who were

responsible to the provincial governors, commissioners and deputy commissioners. **Tribal Areas** were different from the other two misnomers of India and British India and they remained so till the last day of raj. These tribal areas mostly on western frontiers but also on eastern and northern frontiers were directly under the viceroy, the political agents were carefully selected and till 1930 all were British. The political agents were responsible to the foreign office of India. In case of NWFrontier the political agents communicated in the same pattern to the chief commissioner, the first governor of NWFrontier was appointed in 1935. Baluchistan itself was another adjoining political agency south of NWFrontier . The princes of these staes were given subsidy and were allowed certain gun salutes depending upon their importance. Viceroy was authorized 1010 gun salute where as the Nizam of Deccan and maharaja of Kashmir were entitled 21 gun salutes most of the princes were entitled nine gun salutes. Staes were allowed to have a militia or army with British officers overlooking the affairs. Honorary ranks of lieutenant to general {very rarely} were bestowed upon the princes, states had their own flags and were not bound to follow the British legal system as enforced in British India rather own cultures were followed.

**Indian Army and British Army in India** also represent two different segments of the army. The regular British army regiments had a tenure of duty in India spanning over five to seven years, they had exclusive all British ranks.; they were known as British Army in India. The standard army which took its birth with the BEIC comprising of British Officers and native other ranks was known as Indian Army`. Native officers were given commissioned after First World War. Indian Army had its own commander in chief; there was some discrepancy among the allowances of both armies. It was in 1907 that a new corps was raised known as frontier Corps mainly responsible for the Western Frontiers of India & British India. Ironically there were few princely states on the western frontiers they included Kashmir in the north followed by Nigar, Hunza,Tangrel, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Amb, Tank and Kalat in south. A new concept of military was introduced comprising of Militia, Levies, Scouts, Rifles, Border Military police supported by regular army.

Politically the administration was run on bureaucratic system with precise instructions and protocols to follow. The officers who were inducted in the district administration were either inducted directly through the competitions or from regular army; again either on recommendations or through examination. These officers were allowed to retain their army ranks and were also allowed to automatically enhance their prefixes of rank in accordance with the routine promotion of officers in army. Thus Major General Sikander Mirza one of the very first Indian to receive his commission from Sandhurst in 1920 was inducted in foreign service and posted as political agent when he was captain but despite remaining in civil service he still changed his rank when ever his seniority was promoted in army, he finally became a defence secretary of Pakistan in 1952 and then a governor general and finally he took oath as the first president of Pakistan in 1956. Suzerainty over Britsh India & India from 1857 onwards rested with the crown Queen Victoria was proclaimed as Empress of India in 1876 followed by King – Emperor Edward VII, the title Emperor was meant for India.

Princely states were organized into presidency {Madras} Resideny{Kashmir, Deccan} and agency. These state agencies dealt with the princely states , the North Western Frontier Sates Agency looked after the princely staes on North western frontier, down below was the Baluchistan Agency which had the {Kalat, Kharan, Las Bela, Makran}. One distinct feature of this western frontier was the creation of political agencies on the same footing as for princely states to deal with the tribes , who hitherto never

had any central authority to submit. Political agent in these tribal agencies had the same position as other political agents rather they were the pick of the pick, personally interviewed by the viceroy which mainly was in the form of the evening tea with viceroy and vicerine.

This whole composition and relation between the princes and suzerain remained as per royal protocol based upon century old customs. Ironically the layout of the states was such that British India did not have any direct contact with the Afghanistan, Iran and China. The tribes inhabiting these tracts were free men in every sense. They were not savage like the African tribes with whom the white men first had contact. The tribes on the eastern frontier were different in every sense from the western tribes separated by a thousand miles. The eastern frontier was jungle with Burma as the neighbor, weather tropical with torrential rainfall, swamps and weather based water channels, jungle full of wild life. How civilization penetrated is still a mystery as when they were discovered they were living and are still living in the old Dravidian jungle way of life. Humid weather gave them dark skin, short height, fragile body and a culture basing upon nudity. Burma was eventually annexed with British India after the Anglo-Burmese wars

## Chitral Scouts

Chitral Scouts {CS} were raised in 1903 on the recommendation of the political agent Captain McMahan. At that time Chitral, Drosh, Chakdara, Malakand, Drazinda and Jandola in South Waziristan were the only places in agencies where there were British regular army battalions stationed. That speaks itself of the importance of the Chitral, Dir and Swat agency. This agency differs from others in many ways, its importance was not due to its militant culture rather due to the Russian threat. The strength of British garrison at Chitral had been reduced to one infantry battalion along with sappers and a section of artillery. This strength remained at Chitral till 1942.

Chitral State Scouts were raised as classical militia; comprised entirely of local population which will trained only for two months a year and rest of year perform their normal task. This is what Machiavelli had propounded in 15<sup>th</sup> century and it was adopted in Chitral in entirety.

Strength was 1200, which means that this number will be given training, they were called for training and manning of post in batches of two hundred for a duration of two months each year. They were provided with Martin Snider rifles but were not allowed to take home, two British officers remained in command. Headquarters were at Drosh where a fort was constructed. Pay and allowances were shared by the political agent and the Mehtar. Shuja Ul Mulk was also installed as the honorary commandant of Chitral State Scouts, Shuja remained in this honorary position till 1936 when he died after a rule of 41 years. Thus his stint as honorary colonel commandant spans over 33 years the longest in Pakistan's military history. It is a continuity of history that traditionally the Mehtar is installed as the honorary colonel commandant, in present day Chitral Scouts as well, presently ..... is the colonel commandant. This CSS acted more as a border police than as a militia however its primary task was to protect the British officials at Chitral who were acting as a listening post. Mehtar meanwhile initiated a programme of openness; he was invited and visited Calcutta in 1899, at Peshawar vice regal's Durbar in 1902 and at

Coronation Durbar at Delhi in 1903. Mastuj and upper Chitral including Laspur and Yarkhun was made part of Chitral territory with Mehtar entering into a pact with the natives in 1909.

On raising the initial batch of scouts were given extensive training in drill for which the drill instructors from the regular British army unit stationed at Chitral were borrowed. Firing was the main thrill for the recruits if they can be call recruits. Air was informal and so was the routine. Polo was a major attraction in the evening when the scouts would show their prowess. Watching them play polo was a treat and lesson in war itself, fearless gallops after a ball the control over the ponies and coordination between the hand and eye while galloping speaks volumes of military traits; it was a question of only harnessing these .

### **Chitral Annual Relief- 1904**

Since the 1895 the regular British battalions were stationed at Chitral their annual relief is part of classic military history. Regiments stationed as far as Bangalore were moved to Chitral. Some regiments were required to adopt route march till a railhead and then to Nowshera, where as the relieved battalions had to march from Drosh till Nowshera. In most of the cases the relieved battalions were stationed at Abbottabad after their tenure at Chitral. The Peshawar Division was responsible for the conduct with general officer commanding required to be physically present at Chakdara for the whole duration which took ten days both ways. Political agent of Swat, Malakand & Chitral was responsible for the local provisions of grain. Ice camps were also established on the advice of medical officers. Scale of ration and equipment was also altered; for troops going to Chitral were authorized to have three pair of shoes and two pair of socks , importantly great coat was also issued individually otherwise at normal stations they were authorized 33 coats in one infantry company. Followers were also allowed to have 20 seers of luggage and they were issued one pair of socks apart from the No.3 Shoe.

British garrison which was stationed at the Chitral amounted to two infantry regiments, , one company of miners and sappers, one section of two guns. A line of communication was opened from Mardan through Malakand, Chakdara, Dir via Lowari to Drosh; it was the responsibility of Khan of Dir to keep it open in his area for which he was given subsidy as well. Dir Levies were raised in 1897 for this purpose they were under command of the Khan of Dir. Similarly levies were also raised at Malakand known as Malakand Levies. This garrison was annually relieved utilizing this route. It was only in 1936 that the first ever relief using motor vehicles was utilized, the road from Chakdara was vastly improved by then still Lowari had to be crossed on foot. RAF from 1929 onwards started providing air lift and in 1937 an aerial relief was carried out in the winter when passes remained close. Chitral Levies initially had to look after the three post namely Ziarat, Mirkhani and Arandu. Initially it was only Drosh which had an airfield it remained operative till mid fifties after which the Chitral kucha strip was made and aircraft started operating at Chitral.

### **Third Afghan War 1918.**

The war itself was not focused on Chitral sector, this sector differs from all others in a sense that it is inhabited by non pathan tribes who do not share the common language with rest of combatants of the war. However purely from military geography the Amir Amanullah of Afghanistan had much more

chances of success here in Chitral than anywhere else. Chitral in the summer of 1914 was a peaceful garrison, the lone infantry regiment was stationed at Drosh, Chitral Scouts itself had only one company in the summer to train with or for manning of the posts. May has been a month of almost all major events in subcontinent thus it was in May 1914 that Amir Amanullah broke his relations with British India because it had delayed in accepting his kingship and more so politically to have the public support in his favour which is so vital in country like Afghanistan and what better way than to have Jihad; tribes became electric with the prospect of an all out war against the infidel British. Mehtar of Chitral also received one such firman from Amanullah on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1914 through the military governor of Afghan Asmar province Brigadier Muhammad Usman Khan; Mehtar Shuja Ul Mulk rejected the offer and kept his side of pact with the British intact. It was a very wise step of diplomacy. Afghanistan after 1893 had carried out an all out massacre of the Red Kafir or Broghul driving them into the Chitral Kafiristan. Majority of the kafirs had accepted Islam and were known as sheikhs moreover the Kafiristan itself became Nuristan in Afghanistan. The war bugle was sounded and Chitral prepared itself for an attack of Afghanistan.

Chitral Garrison comprised of 1/11<sup>th</sup> Rajputana Regiment with 450 bayonet strength it was commanded by Lieutenant colonel F.C.S. Samborne who was also the commander of all armed forces in Chitral which comprised apart from his regiment, a company of sappers and section of guns ex 23 mountain battery, along with 1000 scouts of Chitral; they had been called up for the service. Chitral State scouts were being commanded by Capatin Crimmin with Lieutenant byres as the sole British officer.

Chitral was divided into eight districts each under an 'aatlique' responsible for collection of revenues and also head of the local scouts, it was his responsibility to collect the men for training and sent them to the Drosh . Under every aatlique there was a 'charwelo' responsible for a group of villages within a valley, each village itself had the Baramush the head . It was the Baramush who was the first ladder of the Chitral State Scouts organization. Now these aataliques gathered the trained men . Chitral Scouts were under the political command of assistant political agent Major N.F. Reilly who started mobilizing on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1919.

Company of scouts was initially deployed at Galapach six miles downstream of Mirkani, aim was to keep an eye on the Arandu pass. Mehtar on the other hand had sent his various sons along with his body guards on various passes also. Initial Afghan movement started from 12<sup>th</sup> May onwards, they captured Arandu and soon the Scouts position at Galapach was over ran by 600 strong afghans, scouts retreated to Mirkani. Afghans were certainly moving forward with an aim to capture the Mirkani and close the Lowari Pass.

### **Clash at Mirkani.**

On 14<sup>th</sup> May Major Reilly along with two companies of Chitral State Scouts arrived at Mirkani from Drosh. The retreating scouts were also harnessed and together these three companies put up a courageous attack on the Galapach position and reoccupied it; fighting continued the whole day. In another classical display of fighting the scouts along with 50 men of Mehtar bodyguard under command Major Reilly put up another attack on the Kauti feature which was across the river and source of permanent irritation for the Galapach position the objective was achieved with in hours on 16<sup>th</sup> May. Afghan strength at Arandu was estimated to be over 600 supported by four artillery guns and a large tribal lashkar, apart from Arandu the afghans were in control of Bashgal and Birkot valleys

On 21<sup>st</sup> May 1919 in the overall plan the one company of Chitral Scouts were amalgamated with the Mehtar's bodyguard in an attack on the above mentioned positions. Two companies of Chitral Scouts under command Lieutenant Byres of Scouts pressed forward on the right bank and two companies on left bank under their commandant. Subsequently Byres moved forward, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May he had a temporary bridge thrown over the river in which the scouts were expert in doing so, Byres moved ahead to face Afghans at Darshot but to his dismay they had vacated the posts before his arrival.

### **Battle of Birkot 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1919.**

Almost entire British garrison at Chitral was present at the battle of Birkot, a small town inside the Afghan province of Asmar where the bulk of Afghans were concentrated. Battle opened up on 23<sup>rd</sup> May at 0700 hours with own artillery opening up, the Rajputana and Chitral Scouts carried out the advance and by 1400 hours the Afghans started retreating from Arandu. Afghan resisted was mainly in the form of sniping. Chitral scouts lost eight men and another 23 were wounded. After the action the Afghans started reinforcing themselves thus the political administration of Chitral very wisely decided to retreat back into own areas thus the two companies of Chitral State Scouts were left at Mirkani Fort and remainder took position inside Drosh Fort along with other elements. On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1919 the armistice was signed between the British India and Afghan government. However the situation at Chitral remained precarious with Afghan General Wakil Khan planning to move into the Chitral thus two companies of Scouts and few men of Mehtar bodyguards were stationed at Ayun and one company was also sent to Lotkoh valley. On 17<sup>th</sup> July 1919 an Afghan attack came upon Bambouret Valley via Zonor Pass and advanced to a mile of the Bambouret Village. Afghans had a complete control of all passes starting from Zidig Pass in the north to the Brambolu Pass in the south. Lowari Pass was also threatened by 500 odd Afghan tribesmen with menacing posture towards the Ziarat post. Lieutenant Byres with two companies of Chitral Scouts physically attacked this conglomeration of tribesmen and pushed them back. The situation in Chitral started coming back to normalcy after signing of the treaty at Rawalpindi on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1919; thus ended the first blood of Chitral State Scouts from which it emerged as a victor. Three scouts were awarded with posthumous award of Indian Order of Merit, one with Military Cross, one with distinguished Service Order and two each with Indian Distinguished Service Medal and Title of Khan Sahib.

More importantly the concept of Scouts in Chitral so different from the other militias proved a success. Unlike North Waziristan Militia and South Waziristan Militia along with Khyber Rifles where mass defection took place, there was not even one defection among the ranks of CSS. Being entirely composed of one qaum it had its own advantages which proved so good in this conflict.

### **Reorganization 1930.**

. Chitral State Scouts had strength of four and half companies at the beginning of 1930. Pay in 1930 was as follow, a Subedar was getting Rs 50/ per month where as a Havildar was getting Rs 15/, a Naik Rs 12/ and sepoy Rs 10/per month. Ration allowance was given at a rate of Rs 9/ pm, the subedar major apart from his pay was given an annual allowance of Rs 25/. Clerk was a highly paid trade with a pay of Rs 120 per month, armourer was paid Rs 45, religious teacher was getting Rs 10, and gardener was being paid Rs 9 per month. The strength of Chitral Scouts was as follow, eight subedars, 32 havildars, 32 naiks, 64 lance naiks and 736 sepoy. There were four chowkidars as well who were being paid at Rs 15 per month, there was a pupil teacher also.

The nomenclature of the Chitral State Scouts was changed into Chitral Scouts in 1928, it was not merely a change of name but it also encompassed financial effects. The Mehtar who was knighted after the third Anglo-Afghan War, his subsidy was also increased and above all he was entitled to 11 gun salute now. British thus in an effort to lessen the financial burden upon the state undertook the proposal to reorganize the Chitral Scouts in this background. There were 9 companies of Chitral Scouts at the end of 1919 but these were gradually reduced and by 1930 there were six companies which were further reduced to 4 companies under the Chitral Scouts name. The reduction was carried out after a detailed study. Each company had four platoons with two subedar, eight havildars, eight naiks and 200 temporarily naiks or soldiers. Thus each subedar to command two platoons or half company with a havildar designated as platoon commanders. The subedar and havildar were bound to undergo one additional month of training apart from the one month which they were supposed to undertake with their company. Each company itself to undergo one month training. On the financial side a reduction of 109 men all ranks was carried out. Companies were named as Lasper Mulikho company, Turikho company, Mastuj company, Kuff Company and Lutkoh half company.

Chitral retained its strategic position, in 1936 the Gilgit agency was leased over by the British India from the Kashmir state for a period of sixty years. Gilgit Scouts thus came under the control of Frontier Corps and a greater interaction took place between the Chitral Scouts and Gilgit Scouts. The annual Shandur polo tournament was basically a clash between these two rival scouts outfits.

A road was greatly improved between the Chakdara and motor transport was used for annual relief till Dir. Commander in Chief paid a visit to the Chitral and Chitral Scouts in 1936. The road move was a tedious and dangerous maneuver with constant air support and piqueting of the route. Dir Levies were up to the task. Air relief was carried in the winter of 1936-37 when aircraft taking off from Risalpur would land at Drosh within an hour. Heavy pieces of artillery were flown from Rawalpindi which included 3.7inch howitzer. For seven years Mehtar Nasir ul Mulk reigned Chitral and in his tenure the Chitral opened up a little bit towards the Afghanistan in terms of timber trade.. Mehtar was an enlightened ruler having served with a British regiment for an year, he was the ideal; he politically united Chitral with Dir by marrying the daughter of Nawab of Dir. Mehtar Nasir ul Mulk was given the honorary rank of major in the British Indian army.

### 1943

In 1942 the last of British soldier left the Chitral for they were required at more important places due to fortunes of second great war which at time was placed heavily against the British. The strength of Chitral scouts was increased to 10 companies with an addition of one section of 2.75 inch Vickers machine gun. The strength was first increased from four companies to six in 1935. More importantly the scouts now came under the control of Frontier Corps for technical purposes. The political agent of Dir, Swat & Chitral Agency still retained their control but now the posting of officers became a FC affair rather than an military. The first fruit of this was the training of Chitral Scouts troops on the machine gun which was provided by the instructors from Tochi & SWS; moreover native officers of Chitral scouts had to spend three months either at Tochi or at SWS to learn the fine tricks of frontier warfare. Overall the Chitral Scouts still retained their individual flavor from the other corps of FC; they maintained their one qaum recruitment and also the unique system of mobilization and one month training.

### 1947.

The political history of Gilgit and Chitral is almost interwoven, in 1947 when the question of accession of states to Pakistan arise there was a feeling among the ruling elite of Chitral to be interlink with Afghanistan more than with Pakistan basing upon the geography but the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1947 plan had left no option to the states but to choose either between the India or Pakistan. Mehtar Muzafur ul Mulk .. had good relations with Quaid and Chitral acceded to Pakistan in August 1947; Gilgit had a different story. Mehtar Muzafr ul Mlk died in 1948 and his son Saif ur Rehman who was already recognized as the Mehtar by the British India took over. It is worth noting that almost all the mehtars{ Shuja ul Mulk, Amin ul Mulk} had the Afghan bloodline running from their mother side. Saif's mother herself was daughter of an afghan refugee. Let it not be forgotten that all mehtars trace their lineage to Sangin Ali a Persian thus the Persians cultural influence is even to day visible in the form of courtesies.

Chitral sate was in almost chaos after the death of the Mehtar Muzafar, traditional plots to snatch the power were put into lay. Mehtar Saif himself is partially responsible for the anarchy that ensued. In April 1949 the bulk of administration including the wazir-e-azam , commander in chief and chief secretary were all arrested and properties confiscated. This was a real crisis for Pakistan as Afghanistan was always ready to exploit any weakness in the frontier states.. By September 1949 the crisis were over with the intervention of political agent Malakand.

In **October 1949** crisis of another kind erupted when the marriage party from Dir which had come to take the bride; daughter of late Mehtar Nasir ul Mulk as per earlier agreement. They were informed by the Mehtar Saif Ur Rahman that he himself has married the lady in June 1949 but did not disclosed to the people; this set the stage for a civil war between the Dir and Chitral. Saif was later evacuated by air from Chitral and sent to Lahore to undergo training in civil services academy. It is worth mentioning that he had already received the military training from Pakistan Military Academy in 1948. The state was now put under a board of directors' with assistant political agent as head. Chitral at that time had governors in what are tehsils now. There was a governor at Drosh another at Mastuj under the accession of 1947 the states retained their administrative set up as it was before accession. Saif later had a tragic end, he died in an air crash over Lowari in 1954 while he was coming to Chitral after years of wandering; all due to one fatal mistake of heart. He was succeeded by his four year old son Saif ul Mulk with political agent Malakand as the regent. This royalty was finally abolished by President Zulfikar Bhutto in April 1972 when government abolished all such titles and privy purses. Just for historical fact the India had abolished all these princely states privileges under Indira Gandhi in 1971. Presently the Mehtar is a traditional title which people generally respect in the valley. Mehtar is presently living in the old fort on the banks of river Chitral.

### **The Kashmir Operations of 1948**

Soon after independence, the force was called upon to move and stabilise the situation in Guraiz (Astora Sector) and Skardu valleys where Gilgit Scouts under command Col. Hassan Gilgiti was retreating. The enemy had made considerable advance across Burzil Pass. Chitral Scouts relieved Gilgiti in Kamri and Domel Sectors. Some of the posts established by Chitral Scouts in Shaqma Sector are still known as Chitrali-1 - Chitrali-2 and Chitral Soon (Tower). Chitral Lashkar under command Capt. Mata-UI-Mulk moved to Skardu viz Deossai plains and facilitated the capture of Skardu. During this battle 2x3.7" How sent by Mehtar of Chitral were used. The Lashkar also succeeded in capturing 250 POWs including an Indian Lieutenant Colonel Sher Jang Thapa.



Asmat wali's diary. Nursing assistant baba Asmat wali died in 1988, he took part in Kashmir Jihad of 1948, more importantly he left a diary of the account. Distance from Chitral to Kamri was 420 miles which they covered in 38 days, Asmat on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1948 notes in his diary 'saw Pakistan currency at a shop, Government of Pakistan was written on the currency note'. He also notes down the change of command at Gilgit Scouts where Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah Jan was transferred and Major Tufail took over the command of Gilgit Scouts. Asmat also mentions the Indian counterpart Colonel Suba Lal Chand who according to him was a shrewd man. But the most touching part of his diary is the account of an old woman in Mimmnerger, a rich widow who sacrificed over twenty five goats for the scouts in four months for the scouts because they were extremely short on ration'. Asmat when arrived back as victor to his native town in November 1949 came to know that he had lost his sister in his absence she had died almost immediately when he had left for Jihad but her mother intentionally did not let pass the information to him.

### **His Highness Colonel Muttah ul Mulk, Victor of Skardu.**

Gilgit after the freedom act of Gilgit Scouts was still under the threat of the Dogra forces stationed at Skardu and Leh. There was a company strength at Skardu under Captain Parbat Singh as a reinforcement to the Dogra Battalion, another Dogra officer Captain Kishen Singh was holding the Tsari pass the mouth leading to the Skardu along the Indus going upstream. Brigadier Faqir Singh was the overall commander with headquarters at Kargil.

## **1956**

Amidst such chaotic environment the training and standards of the scouts were bound to drop. The scouts all belong to the same area and ethnicity; thus palace revolts had their impact on them. Gasht and long gasht were thus a valuable mean to keep the scouts busy. By 1956 they were organized into two wings known as **left and right wing**, the scouts were now permanent body. The normal gasht was of two days and long gasht spans over ten days. Each post was supposed to have eight gasht per month each ranging no less than 15 miles. Method of recruitment was simple, adjutant would inform the Wazir-e-Azam of the deficiency in manpower. Chief secretary was in fact known as Wazir-e-Azam, thus he would in turn inform or order the 'hakims' the village headmen, who would direct the desirous young boys for recruitment. The physical standards were; age no less than 17 years, height 5.6 inches, weight 120 pounds and chest expansion of 30-32 inches. Recruits training duration extended to 36 weeks and conducted at Drosh. There was a permanent corps drill staff comprising of one jemadar adjutant, one corps havildar, three drill naiks and 5 drill lance naiks. For night training all ranks used to wear the boot made of skin {Kun}. At quarter guard the usual strength at day was two by six and at night two by twelve scouts. There were three quarter guards, one at Chitral, other at Drosh and one at Arandu. Drosh had an additional responsibility as well they daily had to provide a mail guard of two scouts for the protection of mail from Drosh – Mirkani.

A soldier had to be a first class shot., having a certificate of 3<sup>rd</sup> class education, should have passed the senior sepoy promotion examination and above all recommended by his wing commander, only then he was considered for promotion. Troops had a good ration, they were issued with meat thrice a week, they were entitled 11 chattaks of atta, half chattak of ghee and one chattak of daal daily. A

special allowance known as khowar was admissible to the officers after they have passed the language, it valued at Rs 100 per month.

### 1965 War

Chitral Scouts were bit late in taking part in the war, the two companies of Chitral scouts were ordered to move to the operational area in the second week of war and by the time these two companies reported at Rawalpindi on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1965 the war was over. These two companies remained deployed at Rawalpindi where the threat of air borne troops from India were a distant reality. Subedar Suleman Khan was the commander of Chitral Scouts contingent, they remained at Rawalpindi till the last week of January.

### 1971 War

The situation in the former East Pakistan was getting deteriorated every day and new raisings were ordered by the government. In November 1971 the commandant Lieutenant colonel Afzal in a darbar updated the scouts with the situation and ask for volunteers , four scouts namely Havildar Sarfraz Shah alias Khamshay of Laspur, Naik Nasir Shah Bang{Yarkhun}, Naik Qadeer Khan Raman{Laspur} and Naik Khush Ahmed Khan {Murkhow} stood up and volunteered themselves. Commandant in recognition of their patriotism promoted all these scouts to next rank before their move to the headquarters Frontier Corps. All these four sons of Chitral scouts were later made prisoner of war after the fall of Dacca on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1971. They were repatriated under the Delhi agreement {Simla} of 18<sup>th</sup> August 1973 but were able to join back with their families in December 1974. Among these Naib Subedar Sarfraz Shah Khamshay was able to air his interview through All India Radio in which he highlighted that they are being treated well and according to the Geneva Convention 'I am fine and life inside the prison is also fine'. In the end he remarked in Khowar language '*Gooshkoo Moraien Zannan Soureein*' which is a Chitral proverb meaning 'everything said and heard is false'. This seems to be the yard stick for history of Chitral as well.

Apart from these four scouts more than 140 other scouts from Chitral took part in the 1971 War on Western front at Kargil Sector. They remained at Kargil for over two years, another batch of 40 scouts performed duty at Rawalpindi garrison.

### Kafiristan- Kalash & Bashgol

The Kafirs of Hindukush are the only physical evidence of Chitral's past. The 3000 odd Kafir living on the southern bank of River Chitral in three thickly vegetated valleys with pine, walnut, oak, maple trees; the entrance to these valleys is through a narrow gorge, are an enigma. Tribe still following pagan rites despite being so close to civilisation. They are not man eaters and neither roam in loin clothes, detest violence and generally remains merry. It seems as if they have been living in such remote, inaccessible valley since the time immortal. They at one time between 1000-1500 AD were powerful rulers of Kafiristan {Chitral} the very name Kafiristan

was given by the Arabs to the area east of Badakshan {present day Chitral, & Nuristan province of Afghanistan} . The Kafirs had two main classification, the Red Kafir lived in the more fertile Western Kafiristan - Bash Gol { gol is the common name for a stream, the valley takes its name from the stream which takes origin from Shah Salim Pass in north } and Kalash the Black Kafir or Sia Posh occupied the Eastern Kafiristan. They established the first Aryan kingdom, the passage of Aryans moving down from the high north took place through this geographical corridor {Bash Gol-Chitral- Kunar}. The Red Kafir were the ruling class the true Aryans and black kafirs were the result of intermarriages and working class. **In 13<sup>th</sup> Century** a Kalash ruler Bulesingha was defeated and driven away from upper Chitral by the Rais , a century later Rajawai the last of Kalash ruler was defeated by the Muslims { Mehtar of Chitral }. Kafiristan retained its identity and Emperor Babur acknowledges it in his 1529 AD autobiography, Emperor Babur was aware of the presence of Kafirs when he first occupied Kabul.

World first came to know about them in 1885- 89 when first the British military commission reconnoitred the valley and later Major Surgeon George Robertson spent almost two years among these Kafir and wrote about them . Robertson thus stands as the pioneer explorer of Chitral , however he stayed with the Bash Gol area Kafirs who are termed as Red Kafirs. Durand Line affected the Kafirs most and more than any other tribe. Being non violent in nature they only had the geography as their best defence and now this was demarcated. Not that it matters on ground but in a broad term it took away the support of Mehtar from them as Chitral under Durand Pact was obliged not to interfere in internal Afghan matters and vice versa.

**In 1895** the Afghans carried out a Jihad against the Kafirs, either accept Islam, fight or pay tribute. Kafirs in the past have been a popular commodity as slaves for the Afghans. Kafir's heartland is Bash Gol valley; the valley between River Chitral on north and Bash Gol in south, it is only at Chitral that area is bit plain. Resultantly the surviving Kafirs now inhabit the three ancient valley, Bhamboret, Birir and Rumbur however in the end they were almost exterminated in 1895 but managed to hold on to a narrow strip of land in lower Chitral. Majority of these Kafir embraced Islam and are known as sheikhs in society. *‘ Some twelve miles south of Chitral city and west of Chitral River, there lies the entry to the gorge , between the high and rocky cliffs, the gorge slopes gently upwards, fanning out into a number of smaller valleys and it is in these valleys that the last surviving Kafirs dwell’*, commented by Chitral Scouts commandant, Lieutenant Colonel Afzal in 1972. Afzal was privileged to witness the culture so close, last one to do so was Major Robertson in 1889; Afzal has highlighted the Kalash Kafirs whereas Robertson had highlighted Red Kafirs. There are three main valleys, Rumbir which is closest to Chitral in the south , Bambouret is adjacent to it and Birir further south almost opposite Drosh. All are on the right bank of River Chitral and in a crescent manner occupies all area south, of Chitral.

*‘ Kafir tribe is a highly mixed people, i was struck on more than one occasion at finding a village where tall men with fair hair or light brown hair with pale blue eyes and a shorter type with black hair and olive skin existed side by side.... members of better classes showed signs of*

*Aryans breeding in their good features ...a village chief in Bhumbirit told me 'our elders told me that our ancestors came from Iran and Greece....An elderly farmer in Birir valley told me that their ancestors came from Siam'.*

Very little is known about Kafir religion and rituals. ' *Their original faith is a rather low form of idolatry, admixture of fire and ancestor worship. Imra is the supreme creator supported by a host of lesser deities; Giriz, Moni, Bagiz, Dizma, Krumai, Nirmali and others. Giz was the principal hero a virile warrior god. Kafirs believe in supernatural fairies known as Deo-Log, evil spirits is known as Shitan...one has to go high in mountains to invoke good fairies, the evil lives everywhere. Kafirs believe in hell and heaven known as baishat and dozegh respectively. Two particular divinities Mahandeo and goddesses Jestak { six feet high and eighteen inches broad wooden black plank} are held high in Bumboret valley . Fundamental ritual act in Kafir worship is the sacrifices of domestic animals, a proper sacrifice requires properly lit fire at altar. Few branches of Juniper are thrown into flames with occasion twigs of holly oak, walnut or almond are also used; meat is distributed among the worshippers'.*

**Marriage** an ancient social custom is celebrated in temple ' Jestak- Aan' by Kafirs. Bride and bridegroom enters the temple led by a goat, the goat is alter sacrificed by a boy virgin' on Jesta Mosh' , who later sprinkles some blood of animal on the Jestak as well. Bride has to eat five bread cakes before they are declared as husband and wife. Death rites are also conducted at Jestak-Aan, corpse is palced in arough wooden coffin with a loose lid. For two days and nights the friends and relatives of the deceased stay at temple , eating and drinking, performing ceremonial dances around coffin, singing and dancing, in case of female dead body there no dance but singing. The religious priest is the most important person in the village, known as Shamman. He is an orator and performer as he has to perform religious rites in a opera manner. He creates hypnotic sensations around himself. Kafirs do not bury their dead, the coffin is left in open with stone lids on top at ' Maahan da Jao' {place of many coffins}. Giz is n red Kafir feminine deity protector of home, family and the private life, pregnancy, birth, children, love, marriages, sickness. In the Black Kafir valleys Sajigor,Jatz, Prebal and Warin does the same task. Rich Kafirs do erect the effigies made in wood over the coffins of beloved one. It is no more in use as old sculptors have died and so has the craft also. Kafirs of Birir valley are more orthodox and follow the customs more religiously, 1n 1971 there were only 2000 Kafirs living in Birir valley alone. 'Kafirs of Rumbir and Bambouret valley are beginning to give up some of their ancient customs and traditions'; they now dig graves for their dead. Orthodox do not send their children to school and neither entertain tourist as house guest.

**Kafir women** still stroll the Chitral bazaar wearing colourful attire hardly anyone can point out a Kafir man as he wears no distinct dress item. Women young and old all dress alike, a long black woollen gown ' Sangachs' tied in the waist with a woollen sash either white or light grey. On the head is 'Kopesi' an ornamental cap , heavily decorated with several rows of cowrie shells, hair most elaborately dressed in long and thin plaits. Kafirs do not poultry meat and

considers it impure.<sup>12</sup> Kafirs are fond of music but use only drums of various size and types, motly women dances and men occasionally joins in ‘ The dancing party consisted of of all ages groups, young girls, withered old women and mere children...they formed up into groups of four or five each girl with her left arm around the waist of other girl to her left and her right arm across the shoulders of her partner on the right..cross and circles in a series of complicated patterns, displaying skills and natural elegance, rhythm kept by a seemingly wordless song with monotonous sound , from time to time we could hear the sharp and hollow thump of a big drum’.<sup>13</sup> There are three types of dances among Kafirs irrespective of occasion{death or marriage} and are performed simultaneously one after the other. First is known as Dosha, second as Drazhailak and last one as Cha. Kafir is a female dominated tribe, women do not observe purdah, remarkable number of women have chestnut ahir with percentage having blue eyes, they are forbidden to enter the sanctuaries of god except on special occasions, even the normal religious rites have preference to men.. They ae not allowed to keep comb in the house rather leave it under a stone near a water stream, they set their hair after three days. During menstruation period women are segregated from the community for five or six days in a special house ‘ Bashaleni’, every fair size village have one. Uncooked food is left on a stone opposite the Basha leni and one of the inmates comes out and collects it. If for any reason any women from outside has to go inside bashaleni then she has to strip anked before entering it and on coming out has to take a complete bath . Three main festivals of Kalash are Jyoshi { Chilimjuich} in May and last for three days. Women and girls agther flower and decoratteir houses, sheep and goats are sacrificed, dancing and wine drinking goes in on in every house, milk is sprinkled over goddesses Jestak. Porh is celebrated in September and Chownas {chittermas}

**Shekhandeh** , these are converts from Kafir religion into the folds of Islam willingly. They constitute almost 1.5% of Chitral population. They are settled in Bhumbirit, Birir upper valleys like Langurbat and Jinjerait. They are also immigrants from Afghanistan, previously they were known as Red Kafir and were living on the western Kafiristan but after the 1895 Jihad majority of them embraced Islam, even now whenever any Kafir accepts Islam he is known as sheikh. Family life is compact and a normal family comprises of 15 odd members including the three generations living together. Male enjoys the polygamy and women works in the field, in short their cultural and social life has not been affected much by change of religion. Afghanistan after 1893 had carried out an all out massacre of the Red Kafir or Broghul driving them into the Chitral Kafiristan. Afghanistan after 1893 had carried out an all out massacre of the Red Kafir or Broghuls driving them into the west { Chitral’s Kafiristan}. Majority of the kafirs had accepted Islam and are known as sheikhs moreover the Kafiristan itself became Nuristan in Afghanistan

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<sup>12</sup>*Chitral & Kafiristan*, Lieutenant Colonel Afzal, 1972, p-82.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p-76

## **Chitral Revisited- Chapter IV**

### **Chitral Scouts Officers Mess.**

The present day Chitral Scouts Officers Mess is known as Petako Gaz in Chitrali language , it has a history many many years ago thee was a khonza {the royal princess} who came here and left her dupaatta here and when she went back to the palace she remembered her cloak and mentioned it to her attendants and gave the direction to the place as well, in Chitrali language Petako Gaz means a place whee princess forgot her veil. The present location was at one time part of Mehatr's property and even now the national Gol park almost stars from where the mess finishes.

Petako gaz is in almost seven layers or tiers of ground which have been levelled enough to construct the building. The original building of the mess was constructed in 1903 and from then till 1990 it remained in its original shape for the reason that Chitarl Scouts itself moved out from here and established headquarter at Drosh and it was only in 1995 that they came back to this Mess again. Many additions have been carried out but the original design has been left intact, credit goes to the commandants for maintaining the original layout which is more or less like Swiss dacha .

The most notorious stone on frontier is here the 'laying stone of Captain Boono'. Mess presently has apart from two original gusetrooms known as Birir and Rumbor almost a dozen other guest rooms and living quarters for the adjutant and one wing commander, accommodation for mess staff, signal detachment and security guards. Thee is a diesel generator, one hydel power which was commissioned in August 2013, gymnasium, library and Billiard room. One clay court tennis court at tier two, one squash court at tier three are also there. There is one mosque as well.

Mess have two main halls which are rectangular in design , one si used as dining room and other as ante room having television facility; in old days thee used to be a piano and radio followed by radiogram.

In 2002 the guest room charges were rupees 200 per night for lieutenant colonels and above and rupees 150/ night for all others while on leave at Chitral Mess. Mess in order to maintain its decorum usually bans the entrance of children under twelve on official functions. Chitral Scouts have one peculiar issue almost all their official inspection and tour takes place in summer time mainly due to blocking of road movement in winter thus they have heavy load of guests in summer therefore it is always advisable to have advance booking here.

### **September 5<sup>th</sup> 2013- Major Langlands School .**

I am back to Chitral Scouts and Chitral once again; this time the circumstances are different, I came here primarily because I got a text from Carey Schoffield who is the principal of Major Langland School at Chitral and I had met her once in the last visit and quite impressed with her efforts , academic credentials{ Oxford & Cambridge} and above all her personality she is in mid fifties but quite attractive and I think she thinks and acts like a Victorian era lady but it suits her. To my mind she fulfils the empty and void of Frontier where so far no lady has made her marks in a more dignified manner

Any way I got from the Landi Kotal with the commandant Khyber Rifles and then got hold of a taxi {fare 9500rupees} but for a noble cause it is worth it. Driver an Afghan Sameen , well by dinner time we were at the Chitral Mess passing through the Malakand and crossed Lowari Top , weather was good and road also good. Security on road is appreciable. I remember meeting two havildar of 31 Baluch at the base of Lowari, and I am motivated by his words ‘ that our forefathers sacrificed their lives so I can be free today , now it is my turn’. The excitement of coming day was intense , I was constantly sending the messages to Carey informing about my location , she invited me for breakfast next day. I made a commitment with the driver to pick me up next day at 0630 hours , but neither he came nor the waiter brought my clothes from ironing, in the end I got the clothes and got hold of a new taxi and managed to reach the Hindukush heights by 0720 , five minutes late.

In the school it was opposite to my expectations but good, I had to give a five minute talk to the school in the assembly , I did by getting on to the flag post and speaking in loud but powerful voice, telling the boys how important freedom is , why we are celebrating defence day, the nobility of the profession of soldiering and so on , later I sang the national anthem with them and then realized that these boys are in fact keeping words with me and very few know the national anthem {same as in our school days}. Then the day was spent with the teachers, giving talks to three classes one by one, tea with school staff and another talk with Carey mostly about Alvi’s death circumstances. I drove with her to the hotel and realized that she wants me to go back without having lunch, but I just wanted to say hello to Major Siraj . I realized that probably Carey did not want me to meet the Siraj , may be it is my own mind but I could feel something in the air. I did not had the breakfast so when I was invited by Carey for lunch I accepted it, another person Mr Arif Habib also joined in he had arrived just today{5<sup>th</sup> September} and seems to be old acquaints of Carey because she had embraced him although only customarily but she did and she did not did that with me. Anyway lunch was ok , I don’t like the food in Chitral after the food of Khyber. Moreover I have noticed that these Chitralis are less hospitable than the Khyberis. I just talk about history and realized that Carey has very little knowledge about it , her field is English anthology { I have made a note to ask what is it}. But by and large Carey is a respectful person and I admire her being here in Chitral , I have always considered her since I have met her to be a Victorian era romantic mem sahibha. Her transport dropped me at the Chitral Mess. I am conscious of petrol prices and as such don’t like being dropped or picked by Carey’s vehicle but irony is that I can go there at hotel in a taxi{fare rupees 800} but there is no such thing to come back thus by force I have to accept it.

**Friday**

Well the actual defence day is today and I managed to reach the Chitral Scouts fort in their vehicle although I missed the vehicle taking the adjutant Major Kazmi, it was nice to see him, commandant is new but he had gone to Mirkhani for reconnaissance and conference. Chitral Scouts look good in their headgear of local cap with plume. I sat in adjutant office and same mental frustration which seems to be the hall mark of the Chitral Scouts, 'sir commandant is away and when he will come only then we can extend help in history data' nothing wrong with this sentence but I know the background so I just sat quietly hearing what all is going around. Almost all officers were sitting there Captain Nazar of 148 AD he is from Gilgit, Captain Hamdan is from Guides he has been promoted since our last meeting and a real good officer, the doctor the DDMS. Cup of tea and I was on listening watch, constant telephone rings, constant scouts or subedars marching in, television on mute, mobile.

The issue seems to be the threat of miscreants from across the border, an interception has been made on their communication network along with source report which is the cause of ripple, then a Moulvi has made a speech in mosque calling for elimination of Ismailis from Chitral and he has been called by police, the scouts want him to be put behind bars but police says that there is no such law for this. I recall even in Chaklala garrison last year the Moulvi in the mosque called for action against the shias but nothing was done against him, any action and that Moulvi will become a hero overnight. The army {17 division} is in charge of the district but the problem is that for all practical purpose the district is settled and there is no imposition of any regulations which states that it is under the army thus a great mass of confusion is in the air. There was a small gathering of college boys in front of the deputy commissioner's office protesting for lack of water and electricity in the college, that is the right of the boys and this is what they or every one does in this age but orders going out from the adjutant office was to disperse them immediately before the army headquarters start interfering in it. The two men walked in one was SSP of the city {investigation} and he wanted one of his relative to be discharged from service and adjutant agreed to put up the case to the commandant on his arrival on Monday but warned the individual that he will have to spend few days in scouts jail as well on which the individual agreed.

I gave my camera to the photographer to take pictures, the Bara Khana was at 1230 hours and I was wondering whether I will be allowed or invited in it, with every minute my opinion about the Chitral Scouts was getting worse and worse, it seems that clerks here are very powerful and bit arrogant as well. Well then another message regarding the perceived movement of the miscreants, a lieutenant colonel of military intelligence was also there it was his second day he is from 31 Punjab, a good man, he was also sitting in the office, the news was that some Wazir and Nazir are planning to carry out an attack on the Pakistani post close to Arandu, the weapons have been seen and messages on air confirm it also. Now the Taliban if I can use the word are intelligent enough and at times just by sending false messages they can create a false ripple in the security organizations and unfortunately then all focus gets onto the position mentioned by Taliban in communication and very conveniently the Taliban strike at other place, in my opinion the Ismaili are the target and they live in upper Chitral so let's see what happens. Adjutant then announced to the Subedar Barkat that officers are too committed so they cannot attend the bara khana and therefore their food should be sent to the officers' canteen. I requested adjutant to attend the bara khana as it will allow me to have interaction with scouts; adjutant had no excuse but to allow me.

I was taken by the Subedar Barkat, the tent/qannat was pitched in the western part of the fort, it was still in progress so the BHM took me around of the area, we went to the JCO's Mess and I had a visit inside, not in a good state, it seems that no one has taken meal here in months or years, same as in



Khyber. I met the education JCO who is a n educated person wearing pant/shirt and tie , he has written two books one regarding the women education in Chitral other a novel, I like him he is also the principal of Chitral public school . He mentioned about one scout who is writing the history of Chitral Scout I was almost immediately keen to meet him but he said he will find it. Bara Khana was an experience and all my apprehensions about Chitral Scouts turned out to be true. No spoons no glasses , a rush on food like Punjabi village wedding scene, nothing militarily about it , reason absence of officers and lack of meat in daily diet; anyway I was genuinely upset with the behaviour.

Back to the office area met the quarter master who asked me whether I am still here since my first visit or have I come again , a good and intelligent question , I remained quiet. Food inside the tea bar was fantastic, same food as in troops table but here it was in abundance and in a manner that it looked nice, I declined to eat as I had taken meal with troops but in my heart of heart I did not liked this gesture of officers to have food separately even on this day, now the jig saw pieces of Chitral Scouts puzzle are getting into places. The adjutant announced that a book has arrived just now which is on Chitral Scouts history, it is the same book which the education JCO was mentioning, I was really excited and it was thee in Urdu and a short glance told me it is nothing new from the past data yet two-three incidents are new. Chitral Scouts seems to be having a history of doing mutiny, they did it in 1973 when they were told that other qaums will also be joining the Chitral scouts, they were at Drosh Qila then , Lieutenant Ccolonel Afzal was the commandant the one who wrote a small pamphlet on Chitral as well, the scouts led by the subedar major then marched from Drosh, occupied Chitral fort and watered the airfield and helipad {polo ground} IGFC Brigadier Naseerullah Babar acme from Peshawar and had to stand on the helicopter for negotiations with the scouts. The strategic importance of Chitral with hostile Afghanistan was too immense to take this affair lightly , at the end the scouts won it they signed an agreement with the IGFC with subedar major and the ruling prince as witness under which no other qaum is allowed to serve in Chitral Scouts,' amazing feat.

Next mutiny took place in mid nineties when again the Chitral contingent which was part of a FC Week developed a rift with the wing commander and in the end the contingent was called back to Drosh and court of inquiry conducted and IGFC Major General Ghazi ud Din Rana later gave punishment to over 64 scouts, ranging from seven days to 28 days RI, reduction of ranks, and dismissal from service of the subedar majors. No such steps were taken in 1973. The dismissed subedars later served terms in civil jail and few years later wee given the old ranks pension. Now these are rare scenes and unprecedented in nature. It only highlights how important is the subedar major and how vital it is for the officer to keep an eye on the pulse of the things, both mutinies reminds me of Gilgit Rebellion of 1947, almost a replica. In the evening I saw the games of Chitral Scouts and it was only on sports field that one feels good about them. Riding of two horses, Chitral Scouts have horses but no riding school. Cricket and football, people just watching and relaxing, looks very good. I developed bit of respect for them now, got Chitral scouts badges from canteen. On my way back I wanted to get down in the city to buy ink pot but adjutant did not allow me to go walking and made sure the vehicle takes me to bazaar and brings back to mess, a kind gesture. In the bazaar no ink pot, no shop was open due to Friday. Another good aspect is the Pakistan's recovery at Harare in the first test where Younis scored double hundred and saved Pakistan from a defeat.

Later I sent an text to Carey and have yet to receive the answer back , probably another miss text from me. Let's see. I had a good conversation with Lance Naik Nazir the library in charge , he has a

master degree in islmayiat and is currently doing bachelor of education, I remember how he traced the missing library books , I like him. He gave me some appears and promised to write more.

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2013, Chitral.**

It is 1930 hours and I am sitting in the library which is one of the best among all the Frontier Corps libraries, I cannot go on without mentioning the Lance Naik Nazir of education corps, a good man and very hospitable he belongs to Sanobar in upper Chitral , Mastuj area, I am going to his village tomorrow to interview an old war veteran of 1948 Kashmir War, initially the programme was today but there are two jeeps which leaves for his village and both had gone to Dir with apples. Thus I will take the jeep for Buni which is the junction of Yarkhun and another river.

In the morning I had the Chitrali shawl which are made here in the scouts own handloom , they are different for male and females , difference mainly in colour, male is brown or khaki and much larger in size, ladies is bit short in length and colours are generally more dark, like red or black. I was excited about them and later the works havildar brought the tailor also who took my measurement and let's see what he makes in the end.

Morning are very pleasant here, chirping of birds, the music of water flowing over the stones, the breeze passing through maple trees and in between all of a sudden the calling voice of peacock, the panic stricken voices of Chinese hen, I have always seen them in pair and always worried like oriental wives. I was given a lead by the havildar regarding the chappal makers by the name of Dardon Khan who had a shop at Drosh as well and here he is located in Ataleeq bazaar.

I walked to the bazaar , Tirich Mir was visible toady but partially, weather hot but I enjoyed the walk , I had the white Chitrali cap on me and it helps in breaking the ice with natives and I found myself walking as I am walking in any where else in world. I passed by the old bags shop , my own bag given for manufacture are not yet ready in Peshawar thus I am looking for a hand bag, I found one antique looking bag and I told him to keep it for me. The chappal maker shop was an hoax as there were ordinary looking chapapls, the owner not present and someone sitting who was absolutely blank about this what I gathered from him was that there are no chappal makers in Chitral. Next target was to find a map of Chitral from Faiz Book store. I took the hidden path behind the main bazaar , passing through village and emerging from the city end, they are in process of erecting and constructing a new bridge over the stream. There seems to be a crowd present all the time on bridge watching this feat. I had to ask many shops regarding the amp before I was able to hit the Faiz Book store but he did not had the map. On my way back I stopped at a dry fruit shop and bought the pea nuts. Wall nuts are very popular here but they will be solid in another two weeks. The major areas are upper Chitral and Kaalsh valleys which have ripe wall nuts which are bigger in size; the size of Chitral wall nuts is rather small. I did went inside the centennial school which was opened up in 1926 by the HH Nasirul Mulk, principal was very kind and took me around the building, the main hall is gracious and spacious , I especially liked the Persian and Iqbal's couplets written on wall. School have a tennis court as well, a tree at the court have a rather unusual plaque which was put inside the trunk of maple tree and today it has been covered by the trunk an unusual sight.

I got my chappal polished from a street vendor and paid him rupees twenty, then bought two books one is the proceedings of third Hindu Kush conference held this year and other an urdu on the life of Nasirul Mulk {1936-1943 ruler}, at times one finds a wealth of information in these local books. Then long up walk back to mess, it is quite a walk and good one. Traffic is not much here yet one gets the smoke of vehicle passing close by and changing gear, air is generally clean and fresh with no odour, streets are clean and very few stray dogs. One sees and notice women walking alone or with a child wearing veil but their eyes are always staring at you, I wear glasses to have a better look at them. Have yet to talk to any lady here other than the Carey Schoffield but natives have own class and charisma, I am more keen in having conversation with a Persian family.

In the mess lawn I had a talk with Nazir and mess JCO about the local food delicacies surprisingly there are no sweet dishes as part of Chitral food culture even the tae consumed in upper Chitral has a salt in it and the popular dish of Kheer has salt too. There are many types of bread here, one having only walnut inside is known as Polai and one having potatoes and wall nut inside the bread is called 'Aalomojhi'. Ghulmandi is a another bread in which goat cheese is put inside a bread and then pure ghee or butter is poured after heating over it. Walnut oil is used as a sprinkle over rice to give it an aroma, Chamrogh is the apricot juice in it dry apricot is soaked in water for a day and then filtered with fine cotton cloth and you get only the juice and no pulp of apricot, I have tried it at Skardu only draw back is that apricot initially upset your stomach quite heavily , but in other words it cleans your stomach thoroughly. Shuula is another dish which is a mixture of rice and duck meat. Chitral is famous for its bird shooting and that is why I was curious as how they prepare the shoot meat, but I think they do not bar b que it the way Afridi or Shinwari do. Chitrالي kaalaey is another dish in which small pieces of bread alongwithKaveer which is a speciality of Mulkhow area it is like gaarm masala or kalazera of Rattu, it is used in cooking and also as a drink to fight fever, it is grown on ground and have flowers which after drying are stored at present it cost Rupees 400 per kilogram , walnuts are rupees 300 per kilogram.

### **Chitral, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

I have just arrived back from Songohor the village of Lance Naik Nazir, after spending the night there; presently I am in the mess having a cup of tea and enjoying the weather, which has drizzled.

I went yesterday morning at 0900 hours, Nazir went with me to the Adda which is at the end of Shah Bazaar opposite PTDC Motel, the Hiace goes only when it is full, the scouts with me ensured that I should get the front seat but it was occupied thus I got into rear. The principal of centennial school was also on board, finally coach left at 1000 hours, weather was hot.

I had travelled on this road way back in 1995 and it seems as if nothing much has changed as far as the scenery is concerned but now it is metallic road till Booni. A hydel power is also under construction at Gowazi almost 25 kilometres away from Chitral. My interest now was to follow the siege of Chitral relief force, which came from Gilgit, and to see the area from that perspective. The scenery initially is rugged very narrow and then it opens up however the mountains on the roadside are muddy and kacha with plenty of landslides at frequent distances. Within the coach a lady in burqa and an old man were sitting behind me and when I stole the glance through driver's mirror I realised that she is quite

pretty and quite absorbed in the area, she at the end again put on the burqa. The journey to Booni took almost two hours, we changed direction along the River Yarkhun at times on east bank and at others on west, bridges mainly wooden planks one odd was pucca, I have to think where probably only at Chitral.

Valley has one similar pattern, it opens up and then closes again opens up and then closes, plenty of greenery and trees, on the far bank that is opposite to the road the mountains are barren rugged and it seems there was a road or track in old days because one can make out the track and few abandoned habitats in the form of stone shelters. Agha Khan University and school at Reshan, the government college building short of Booni, the hydel power staff colony, which is well guarded and well lay out, are few of the interesting places enroute. Speed of coach was quite high and scary in nature.

Booni is different from Chitral, I got down at the bazaar instead of Adda where Nazir's brother Amanullah was waiting, mobile phone service works here at Booni, I had a easy load and then got in touch with the Amanullah, we had to wait for an hour for connecting coach towards the Songohor. I spent the time waiting at the electric shop; I was surprised to see so many electric gadgets shop selling freezers, microwave oven, electric kettle and washing machine. I enquired about the sate of electricity not much better than the rest of country rather a bit better but the shopkeeper said that people like to buy and more over if one has bought anything the other will buy it even on a loan. This I have heard before as well.

After an hour the Toyota land cruiser two door was ready for travel, I got the front seat, the seat was broken, driver a very young boy and vehicle had diesel filter clogging issue which creates a power surge at climb, a dangerous proposition but I think none of the passengers were aware of it, I kept my eyes on the road, driver and mentally ready to jump at any instant. The number of students were quite high on the road with very high proportion of girls, most of them were wearing all green uniform dress with white duppatta, I later came to know that theses are private school students, same holds for boys wearing shirt, tie and trousers, college boys were wearing white kameez shalwar, over all an open society which is enlightened, girls were talking with males and enroute driver also picked another female student. For me coming from the Khyber Agency it was quite a pleasant change. I forgot to mention about the headgears, in the coach from Chitral-Booni I saw one pathan man wearing traditional puggri, here many were wearing Chitrali cap but equal numbers were without it and very very few were wearing the white colour including myself.

The track is the same that leads to Mastuj and in pathetic condition, muddy, landslides, narrow and at times it opens up, We stopped at mid point to put water into the radiator there were two three other jeeps also. Soon after an hour of drive we hit the track from where we diverted to the right and below to cross the river, a very narrow track very steep and then over the wooden bridge across the river, a vast ground then steep climb and we were soon into the village, I paid the fare for both of us {rupees 300 in total} from Chitral to Booni it was 150/. Now the walk in the village started, narrow stony path with medium level walls on sides, fresh water flowing, thick vegetation, trees laden with apples of all kind green and red. We walked and walked and it was all uphill when we soon hit the open patch where under a walnut tree I saw an old man sipping tea which was being brought to him by a lady probably his wife but logically should have been his daughters; Amanullah told me he is the war veteran for whom I have come this far. We kept on walking and soon reach the end of village and there between a narrow path was Nazir's house, on one side his living and on other his baitahk. My main worry till now was to find the washroom, I thought whether they have western system or is it in the open. This is a major worry in

strange places and very dangerous one because it takes minutes in mountains before you get stomach upset.

As we entered into the annexe or baitahk what a scene, green small lawn, a three room barrack and fruit laden trees, there stood two children, one boy of ten and a girl of four, both dressed very nicely and clean, expecting the guest. It reminded my own children and me of Skardu who were exactly the same, the house and scenery is same with High Mountain behind the house and green lawn. Children very well mannered, very friendly and very neat in nature and dress. I also admit that in these almost thirty years of military life this is the first time ever that I have visited a soldier's house, Nazir's father is a retired subedar major of 38 Frontier Force regiment, his brother has just passed masters in commerce and his internship will start from Monday at Booni in bank. Overall the village reminded me of Spanish village at Potes, the Scottish highlands. Half the lawn was basking under sun rays and we sat in the shade of apple tree, I pluck one apple and eat it, what a feeling it is, other factor was the washroom which Amanullah showed me and that took all my worries away, I just sat and played with children while Amanullah went for the lunch, I was hungry because I had not eaten anything since morning and it was now 1600 hours.

The valley which I have travelled so far and the place where I stood now is different in one aspect, it is away from main track and on the far bank thus historically and geographically more isolated than the one on the main caravan route. The Booni Valley Pass starts from here, the mouth is very narrow and it is only recently {30 odd years} that the track has been widened at the base otherwise the centuries old foot track is visible on the mountain. Songohor village is at the mouth of the glacier, which is quite long and steep and ends up at Twin Mountains, which are snow covered; their peaks no less menacing than the K-2 only altitude is the difference.

Soon the son of Nazir brought a pitcher, towel and a bowl, I being a socialist declined this but then under the cultural heritage I washed my hands. It is a beautiful thing of culture, which teaches the future the importance of cultural values a typical central Asian culture. Then both went inside and brought two slavers of dishes. I before coming here have been talking with the mess junior commissioned officer in charge about the local delicacies and he promised me to prepare on my arrival back, Nazir have been listening all this. There was Polai the bread made with yeast and swollen. Ghalmandi, the fried pieces of bread slim one, having the fresh cheese in between, Darshki, which is a mixture of eggs and flour; it was good. Shank, which is a curd, made from the boiling of lassi, it is in small pieces and looks good. Sanawajee which is the only thing having any spice thus it is more favoured by me, it is nothing special but mixing of flour with the local masalas and only now one understands the importance of spice trade route.

Despite all my hunger I could not eat anything but simple bread and sanawaji, not that the other foodstuffs were not fresh but may be they were too fresh. The dairy products of each area, valley differs from other thus the taste of milk is also different; I somehow cannot take any dairy product other than that of my own village. After a cup of tea, which was sugarless because in these parts especially in Chitral they do not take sugar; but sugar was present in a plate. We set off for the veteran Nadir who was still sitting under the tree but there were two additional chairs also put there, I occupied one and Amin who also acted as the interpreter did other.

The children all sat around, there was only the spring water flowing melody, the walnut tree had a big hole in it and I enquired about its age and got the nodded affirmative. There was sun and there was shade also, in the close by distance was few fields having the sunrays falling in the middle and brightening up the already cheerful environs. Few women {two} were standing at rather far distance out of ear shot but looking after the grazing cows which numbered equal in strength in addition to the young calf.

Bit of silence as I absorbed the beauty and in any case you do not just go and ask the veteran a question, in most of cases it takes bit of time to understand each other especially for me to start the question, in this case when I asked him, when were you enrolled? And got a puzzled look, it became obvious that he does not understand Urdu thus Amin asked the same and that is how I got it. I could understand few words and thus makes out the whole purpose, old man like so many others do not use hand signs frequently. Nadir was enrolled in 1945 in Chitral sate Scouts at Drosh and in 1961 got his retirement papers from Drosh too. During 1947-48 Kashmir War he was part of artillery battery, it took nine mules to carry one howitzer. They moved through the Shandur pass towards the Gilgit amidst the snow and extreme freezing temperature; they had very little warm clothing with them as it was promised to be supplied at Gilgit. Nadir and the Chitral scouts remain committed for another seven months. Nadir highlighted that the Chitral states and Chitral Body guard fought the war separately. Nadir was deployed at Gurais with his guns for another seven months before they were pushed back. Nadir used to get Rupees 2 only, mainly for purchase of milk, although the pay then was rupees 22/ but Nadir like all other men got it after coming home, in case of nadir it was rupees 400/ quite a sum in those days. There was little ration and insufficient warm clothing at the front. Captain Rauf was in charge of the gunners, Major Mohiuddin who was the brother of Mastuj governor was in charge of the scouts contingent, thus in a way the princely family of Mehtar were all engaged actively in the liberation of Kashmir. For ration Nadir went out on hunting and hunted markhoor, they ate the meat, preserved it, presented the head to the officer in charge and made shoes and coat out of the rest; this is how nadir started living as the son of soil. For trouser the army issued blanket was made. Nadir hated the trouser but it was made compulsory to be worn by the officer in charge ‘ thus I would put it on for his pleasure and parade and would quickly changed into shalwar’. During the operations the Indian Air force attacked many times and it was in one such attack that two scouts embraced shahadat, ‘ we would rush towards the cover as soon as we heard the aircraft noise’.

Nadir stayed t the front and then pulled back, on our way back the mule got buried under snow and it was only after the winter that it was retrieved as it was having official issued items on body, which were the cause of many enquiries.

I had nothing more to ask from him so we bid farewell and had a walk of the village, myself, Amin and his cousin who was in early thirties along with one teenage boy. We walked calmly and slowly through the paths made of stones and reached the outskirts by following the fresh water upstream, soon we reached the fresh water fountain head, it was enclosed by a stone hedge and inside fresh water was oozing out.

Amin narrated me the story about how all this place is the property of one man, Ziaart by the name who pretended to be made when the water channel was being made, he would throw the stones into the dug out channel and finally the people left it up as a bad joke and from that day Ziaart is acting normal

and now own the channel, amin showed me the house of Ziarat later perched on the edge of the channel a good house.

Amin also narrated how the flood on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2007 played havoc here in the village, I did not paid any attention to it taking it as a flow of glacier in summer but I was bit alarmed as the village being old should not have gone through this tragedy.

I asked Amin more about that flood as we walked through the stoned paths in the village, meantime scanning the two women rather one woman and other grown up girl looking after their grazing cows and lambs. I further inquired about the livestock in the village and acme to know that few keep goats, as they require more attention rather lamb is the preferred pet, cows are there which are smaller in height. Amin told me that initially the flow of water in the village stream started increasing then overflowing and soon the colour also changed into mud but none paid any attention, then all of sudden at night the water rushed and the thundering noise of stones being crushed and hurled was frightening which did not allowed people even time to save their certificates of education, by this time we had reached the house.

Little girl was playful in mood and rolled on lawn, crawled under table and generally amused everyone. Amin's father Amanullah also joined in and we talked about the apples and pears. He also highlighted the flood, the earth close to glacier just opened up and started creeping upward this lasted for over three days, only one portion of village was affected badly the other mildly and remaining untouched. The water and adjoining stones took away many old walnut trees, according to him in his life and neither from his old people he had seen or heard anything like that happening in village, best part is that they did not attributed it to any sin like Gomorrah.

It was now almost dark and soon the pale light bulb brighten up clearly indicating the low voltage but soon it was normal and we moved inside the room, There are two Amin big rooms, one washroom with eastern commode and other was closed probably a store, these two room are at two ends of veranda. Inside it was typical native culture with carpet on ground, cushions at the wall and one bed with bedding on it. The hand carved table mat and cornice cover indicates the artistic mind of probably Nazir's wife. I sat t one corner feeling tired and wanting to sleep, my muscles were aching but I had to sit, we had a glass of Chamrock which is a local juice of apricot, it is thick and has its own sweetness ideal for summer, the only drawback with it is that when taken for first time it can upset your stomach, I had taken two glasses and was now waiting for the result. Another feature of mountain or native food, water and bread is that it creates air in your stomach, you need to pass it out otherwise it can create lot of stomach pain. Now all these are culturally taboo issues but they are reality in deed. I soon change into a kameez shalwar which I had brought with me and also handed over the last of shawl to Aman, it was a brown colour male size and I had kept it for myself but now I feel that I have to present something to this old subedar, he was reluctant but happy and I was more than happy to present it to him, my only regret being that I had nothing for the children.

Soon another friend joins in he looked like a genuine tableeghi and was quite interested in my talk. I came to know that Ismailis are in majority in this village and all sects were living happily till 1970 when on fateful day Maulvi Obaidullah made such an inflammatory speech that since then both sects are hardly on talking terms with each other, needles to say that moulvi himself was assassinated after two years. My mind arced towards the assassins of Hassan bin Sabah no doubt looks like their work or

trademark. Another round of food despite all my resistance, rice but without the showering of walnut oil, chicken, turnips, bread, and again the cheese filled chapattis, it was too much but I had to eat it. Then came fruit and finally the beautifully decorated custard, which I was unable to eat. I resisted tea or green tea, promised them that I will take the fruit with me in the morning along with the dry fruit, the walnut oil which I was looking for last two months was finally there. Every valley has its own cooking pattern but not long ago everything here in Chitral was cooked in the walnut oil, which is distilled in the house. But now the Dalda or other oils have taken over still walnut oil has its own charm the way olives are to Mediterranean the same way Walnut oil is to Chitral and apricot Oil to Skardu, surprisingly there is no Apricot oil here. The walnuts of this village are quite famous because of their size, they still need another a month before they are fully ripe and then the outer green shell bursts open and then you have to shake the tree to get them on ground, at times even strong wind can do this job for you. A good tree fetches around 80 kilogram of walnuts which the buyers from Chitral takes away by paying almost one third of the price on which they sell at the end. It holds true for apples.

I had a peaceful night and was up at the fajr prayers remembering that the first vehicle from village leaves at 0600 hours. I sat out side in the lawn and watched the sky, it was still full of stars and soon the first sign of darkness going away appeared. Oh I forgot to mention the moon which rises from the mountains behind the house {just like Skardu house} and when I saw it last night it was probably of tenth day and beautiful to stare at. Now at dawn the birds chirping started coming into ears, the village has over four mosques and equal number of Jamat Khannas. I pluck one pear and enjoyed its freshness. Amin and Aman both came and I sat with the father talking about the village he told me that there are over seven different types of clans living in the village. Meanwhile the breakfast tray came in by this time I was really getting wary of food and complained joyfully that I am leaving this place mainly due to this excessive food which I have to devour where as I would prefer a fresh fruit here. I had to drink tea and eat few pieces of paratha.

I asked the old man about the castes in the village as who stitches shoes that does haircutting. The strange thing is that no particular caste exists in the village for such professions as they do in Punjab. This creates another problem how to classify the people according to their trades. Thus here in this village which is an old village probably in existence for centuries there are seven types of people who live, two categories namely Hishaey and Achanjay along with Ghonomein are the oldest who were always engaged in hardship, hard labour and beegar, then Raza Khel, Syed, Zondhe, Paksheer or Yashaey are the other castes. The highest caste is the Nawab or ruling class that there is none here in village although the old caste the rais who were ruling it before Kator are probably exists close to village. Ismailis and Sunnis both belong to these classes.

Now the question comes in how this village evolved, it were the Ismailis who advanced from the Broghul towards the down south and at one time they overthrew the Kafir clans the original inhabitants of this valley the original Aryans. They then accepted Islam or the line between these two was at the Booni Valley. With the passage of time the incursion of Muslims or Turks from the Arandu valley put the Sunni sect in firm footing and it was then finally under Shuja ul Mulk in 1926 that a wave to convert the Ismailis forcibly into Sunni started which lasted for a bit but still its remnants can be seen. Today very few Ismailis openly confessed their sect; this is what I learnt from the Carey schofield the principal of Major Langland's School at sinhur Chitral, she is of the opinion that majority of the Ismaili teachers simply do not want to answer the question about the sect. Ismailis according to Aman Ullah do not offer



the Friday prayers, on another question about the fair and festivals in the village, the standard Muslim festivals of eid are celebrated and Ismaili also celebrate Nouroze which falls on 21<sup>st</sup> march every year. Now we started walking towards the intended jeep, the regular jeep had gone early and now a relative of theirs will drop me across the river at Perwak from where I will catch the jeep for Booni. I enquired about the graveyard in the village and was surprised to know that there is no community graveyard here, it used to be but feuds have now forced the people to bury their dead in their own lands. It is all due to scarcity of land.

We bid good-bye and Amin the brother came with me in the Suzuki jeep, which had been converted, into diesel till Perwak. In the way it was still not seven o'clocks, I noticed small boys carrying school bags and coming from the other part of river wearing shirt and tie. There were girls also quite grown up wearing all black uniform carrying books in hand. There is middle and high school for girls in the Songohor village, which is a government, owned that is why the uniform is black. Perwak has only middle school. We got down at the Perwak and waited for the jeep to take me to the Booni. Quite a number of students were walking or waiting for the transport. One has to admire the spirit of parents and children in seeking knowledge; these young boys and girls walk almost three –four miles one-way uphill and downhill one way everyday to gain knowledge. The girl's student while passing said salaam to all standing. Soon I got an old jeep CJ-5 to take me to Booni. It is an art to get into this jeep, you have to climb and then squeezed through the rods to sit, I had a rear seat, journey was uneventful, I dozed off many times, but the ever present risk of jeep going down is a reality which kept me on tenter hooks. We were seven people in the jeep, two students, three going for some judicial work, two of family probably going on medical mission.

At Booni, I had a shave and meanwhile I had put my bag into the waiting Hiace and when I came out I saw the Hiace moving out and soon it was gone, I was furious and had all kind of names for these Boonis but then I saw that my bag is now placed in the next waiting coach, it lessened up my anger. The coach left after an hour, I had a rear seat and every now and then the driver will stop to carry an errand for someone at Chitral, it is how things work here, letter to post, something to purchase and some small item to give to someone. Seat was uncomfortable, day hot but later it drizzled, coach traversing at high speed, the constant yaw and kind of roll all put together makes this an uncomfortable ride. I again tried to grasp as much of the geography as possible. Valleys are narrow then open up then again closes down thus each encompassing a separate identity and this is how it was three centuries ago. I arrived back at Chitral at 1200 hours, got the taxi, which charged me two hundred, rupees and I was back in the warmth, hospitality and comfort of mess, nothing can beat it. Had a cup of coffee, thanked Nazir for all his hospitality, received a call from Khyber rifles and then went off to sleep.

### **Saturday & Sunday 14/15 September 2013, Petako Gaz , 1825 hours.**

The General Officer Commanding the 17 Division Major General Sana Ullah Khan Niazi has embraced shahadat at Dir today ; he was hit by an IED while he was going back after spending the night at Drosh. It was only on Friday evening that commandant and myself were sitting in the mess lawn when I came to know that he is coming by helicopter to visit at Langurbat post. The officers were busy in making out the approaches and take off pattern of helicopters while I just remained on listening post but

what I gathered was that programme of general is subject to weather and if it is bad then he may land at Drosh instead of Langurbat. I have never met him , I was scanning the pictures of the Chitral Scouts with the photographer Nazir on Saturday at the office and it was only then I saw his pictures , I had been mistaking him for Colonel Rizwan Rafi but that was Major General Sanaullah, giant of a man; and today at noon I heard from the colonel in charge of the military intelligence about the incident, colonel was going to the mess to hear it on private channels. This is the sad end of the general .

Weekend has been productive, I scanned the pictures on Saturday with Nazir , I still have a feeling that he has hidden certain pictures folders but I think I have enough for the book especially the polo pictures are good. Later I had a tea with the Naik Rab Nawaz from Mulkhow at Phupokhan Gurzain, he corrected me that Ratnei does not mean a cafe rather it is small lawn. He also highlighted that his language Khowar is the more correct version and it is heavy for others , I agree with him. The term Chitrali is as confusing as the term British, in that case it encompasses English, Scott, Irish and Welsh. Same holds true for the Chitral, it is not an ethnic group rather a conglomeration of six mountainous states which are presently the tehsils of District Chitral. In one of the pictures which was taken in Mastuj in early fifties the governor of Mastuj is wearing a paggri which is more of Dogra style than the pathan pattern. Now this is very pertinent lead as the governor always wear correct official pattern of the native state dress but it clearly indicates the absence of Chitrali cap and there by indicating an alien ship of governor. Similar pattern was narrated by the naik also over cup of tea. His father is a retired subedar from FF , a brother was shaheed in Kargil he was serving in Azad Kashmir Regiment there. He himself was initially enrolled in police but later his father pressurised him to join either army or Chitral scouts and now he is a driver here. At Phophokan which means children in Chitrali I saw an old man who looks mentally unstable. I was told by the driver that he was enrolled as a gardener by Colonel Murad in 1986 and since then he is living here doing small errands, he is always ready to fight if any one makes even a gesture towards the Chitral Scouts vehicles or men. The standard of park and the canteen is outstanding; it is certainly among the top ten parks of army in Pakistan. The atmosphere so peaceful with the river Chitral making noise flowing just feet away , you can enjoy the waves and currents of water following under the bridges while sitting on a bench and sipping coffee.

The bakery makes excellent and fresh cake russ, pizza and rolls apart from samosa and kebabs. The other adjoining park is the Chinar or maple gardens it is on the east side of road which separates both parks, old gigantic trees with vast umbrella of branches practically covering the whole lot of park but then this is the beauty of it, ample sitting places have been created by having wooden benches, I saw a shop in which a person was making something on enquiry it was revealed that he is making the samosas for the park, he offered me to have a samosa but I pended it which I am now regretting. There are two bridges, and these parks are adjacent to the new bridges but as one walks few yards the old bridge and road is hit , this bridge is now barbed due to its structure I believe but more due to security, next to it is the Murad's mosque built on the River , one of the most beautiful mosque in Pakistan almost a replica of old Jhelum mosque but it stands out in terms of its design, architecture, location, colour and beautiful rose garden.

On the way back we stopped at the Chitral polo ground which is at the east end of Ataleeq Bazar opposite radio Pakistan and PIA office, a beautiful scene , long elongated uneven green ground which is ascending towards the south , over a dosen polo players were playing and equal number of horses were being made ready astride the ground. Over a thousand men were watching the game, on the far end the two musicians were playing harmonic melodies which indicates the gaol and the signature tune of the

player taking the shoot is played, sun as not very bright, rather cloudy in nature. We sat at the northern end or the bazaar end, two old pavilions are still in use along with a newer one , the players and others were just sitting there.

An interesting day , it was Friday and i wanted to utilise the day important thing to do was to get the pictures of the mounted infantry and the boards of the different appointments. So I was up by the first light , ok bit exaggerating make it second light but i went with Major Kazmi and Captain Fizan along with Major Arbab. Typical mountain morning , little bit of rush in the bazaar and then we were in the fort but this twenty odd minutes drive was enrich, the discussion or rather i joined the conversation when Major Kazmi brought the subject of village defence committees and i enquired about them. Today was the interview day with three or four officers waiting to be interviewed by the commandant.

Typical apprehensions and anticipations of the officers, one goes back year backs when i also went through the same anxiety , to get the house , to get the hut, and apprehensions . Thus it all is very enjoyable and on the other hand one thinks of how time passes so slowly in military life but in a sense it is the beauty of the system ; but it can be a drawback as well. I got the sketch made by the Lance Naik Zahid of the education cadre , an excellent effort beautiful and according to my desire. I took the pictures of it and many other maps of the area and Chitral scouts and the Afghanistan. Then i was lucky to get the commandants briefing from Major Kazmi with whom i am having more informal relationship; I am admiring his qualities. I came to know about the incident at Ursun a couple of years when over 22 Scouts along with the three policemen and levies were killed by the attack through Arandu by the afghans, centuries old pattern; thus i was interested in knowing this important episode in the history of Chitral Scouts the worst night of their history. Meanwhile one C-130 was scheduled to come to Chitral as the pilot of the aircraft had informed the adjutant on mobile . Heard Sindhi in the adjutant office as one officer an ex 5 Light Ack Ack along with his wife herself an army doctor a captain both belonging to the Hyderabad were sitting for interview and talking in Sindhi , what a sound what a feeling to hear it at Chitral. Commandant then had to leave but the Photographer Nazir had taken his pictures and had completed all that required from him. I now waited for the file on occurrences which had the detail of the Ursun incident. The headmaster of the school came and gave me the essays written by the students but the best news was from the tailor who promised to give me the shirt by noon , the work non commissioned officer also showed me the hand woven cloth that was being weave for me. Took some pictures. One interesting fact that has emerged from the adjutant briefing is the Denzing Hall which i had initially heard from Major Siraj Ul Mulk, it is behind the Phokopan Gurzain. I got the albums from commandant offices and also the file but after giving a piece of mind to the clerks . It seems quite in order with some of these clerks. While coming back i wanted to get to the photographer because my sixth senses are warning me about these tradesmen. In the room a pleasant surprise in the form of the shirt , what a feeling what a cloth, so light yet so warm , soft in nature very light. I again went back with the Major Kazmi after having smoked a joint to get the photographer. In the way i found the talk most intoxicating.

Kazmi narrated that they had given the weapons to the Kalash people after two of their men were killed but they refused to take it stating that they do not require it and they trust the state for their protection. Secondly in another village the villagers gave it after

## Injigan

Injigan is the western most valley of district Chitral, its literal meaning in local dialect is 'prosperous'. On its east is tehsils Mulkhow, on west Afghanistan, north Hindukush and in south is Chitral Town and tehsils. TirchMir the highest peak of the Hindukush is situated here, near Karim abad, Rokhon is the second biggest peak situated near Village Sainak, people calls TirchMir as the abode of fairies.

Injigan is divided into three valleys namely Karimaabd, Urkari & Garmchasma. Weather is extreme in winter which blocks almost all ground routes due to heavy snow, spring starts from April onwards. Lotkow is the other name for Injigan, River Lotkow is the largest river of the valley which originates from Kotal Doawra and joins River Chitral near Chitral airport. River Bagosht, Othrai, Gol, Urkari and Karimaabd stream all joins in River Lotkow before it terminates. The river is famous for its clear water and trout Fish. There is mainly one crop in Injigan except in Bahtooli, Shigoor, Momi, Mough and Mardan Koh. The best grapes are produced in area Mough which are distilled to make local wine. Injigan has many other peculiarities but it is the presence of natural sulphuric warm water which is available year around; it is this which makes the Injigan as the most neat and clean valley in whole of northern areas especially when in other areas people seldom takes bath in winter. Mough is famous for the Chitralli patti the hand woven cloth. Urkari valley is the most under developed area of the Injigan, there was not even a jeep able track till 1983. Potatoes of Injigan are also very famous and in great demand. The very first person to be enrolled in Chitral Scouts in 1903 was from Yoft, Shaib Ali Lal son of Khokhan Baig, he later rose to the rank of subedar major the very first subedar major who was a non Kator<sup>14</sup> he retired in 1932. Sultan Jawan alias Manoor, is another brave son of soil who took active part in the Gilgit War of 1947. Sultan Khan Murdaan was born in 1924 at village Murdaan and join Chitral scouts in 1945 and took active part in 1948 War as Bren gunner, he embraced shahadat 40 kilometres short of Srinagar in a hand to hand fight with enemies. Another stalwart of the area and of 1947 war is Islam Shah who retired as naib subedar, he was enrolled in Chitral Scouts in 1932, he died a natural death in 1990. Ghair Dum Shah Chaweelo who has died in 2002 was another brave scout of Chitral.

Injigan has a predominant Ismaili sect adherents, there are Fatimid also who are regarded as the non .

The cultural history and heritage of the Injigan is heavily inspired by the Tajikistan, Badkhashan, Yarkhun, Kashgir which is a logical conclusion of the valley being as the entrance into the Chitral valley. The Jinan China utensils are a speciality of the area which used to come from the Kashgir and china; they were almost unbreakable and above all had the uniqueness to point out the poison in food thus these were very popular with the ruling class. Silver Mushraba also comes from Faizabad in Afghanistan and are given as dowry utensils. Kohkan Baigi is the name of extra large big Deg which were imported in thousands by the prince Kohkan Baig and hence it carries his name even today. Ghaan is another utensil which is made of walnut wood it is big in size the smaller version is called Langri. Tong is a vessel used for keeping milk, lassi and curd, it is the smallest of all utensils. Ghoris is the equivalent of Madaani which is used for making curd out of milk.

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<sup>14</sup> Muhammad rahim, tareekh Injigan, hafiz , chitral, 2006, pp, 16-58.

## **Drosh**

Drosh, I have finally made it here, left the Chitral Mess at 1400 hours luckily Captain Fayzan came to mess on a defender and he was going to Langurbat so I got the lift from him, he was rather embarrassed that I am sitting in the rear but this is how the army life goes but I do appreciate his concern.

Drosh is a magnificent fort, built in 1939 on a higher ground which overlooks the whole valley, at this place the Chitral River is joined by a small river coming from the north; Madaglasht, which is a predominant Persian speaking valley comprising of few villages with ne odd Chitral Scouts post. On the back of the Mess and the fort, {mess is at the edge of the fort on the higher slope} there are two piquet's of British era, one is known as the Dommel named after the village which is down below and other one is known as Azeem piquet named after someone which I have to trace.

Mess service is poor by any standard, I had the lunch comprising of mutton karhai, very ordinary cooked with trace of lamb smell, salad again just average rather poor and now waiting for a cup of tae for half an hour without any trace of it. Otherwise a classic mess by design and style it is almost a replica of Chitral mess in the colour and design. One small corridor then ante room on left and dining hall on right with kitchen adjacent to dining hall and billiard room/library adjacent to ante room. It is all in wood, which makes it so special. Good silver and trophies, everywhere it is reminding of Lieutenant Colonel Murad Khan, I was thinking about him while sitting next to waterfall as why he committed suicide, was it something in the air or the area, maybe after spending few nights here I may understand him better. It is 1700 hours and sun is still setting its rays on the corner of mess and that speaks of the people who selected the place and designed it to have maximum sun in winter. It is much peaceful than Chitral, no more noise of motorcycles or busses only the constant melodic rhythm of water fall but after short time it also looks like a mental torture. Lot of greenery and flowers, roses are still in bloom, lawn is well manicured. Only three nights ago Major General Sana was staying the night here without knowing that it is going to be his last one. By 1725 hours the sunrays have left the mess building, it is cloudy anyway.

Drosh covers the approach towards the Chitral and Madaglasht, the River Chitral flows at its base {Drosh Town} and runs for another fifteen miles before making a right turn towards the Domel Nisar-Mirkhani-Arandu to enter the Afghanistan. In this way Drosh is the key fort, the base depot. Occasionally the snarl of a donkey rips through the silence and add a bass to the water melody to which I have become useful. To this is the added noise of football being hit hard. They play football every evening. The mosque ahs just called the faithful to the prayers. Electricity is the same as anywhere else, selected timings, which are generally abided by, but it is poor in watts, the generator than supplies the power.

Fort is narrow from inside and vehicle cannot reach mess, one has to climb a dozen stairs to reach it.

### **Drosh Killa.**

Drosh is on the southern bank of River Chitral and Drosh Fort popularly known as Drosh Killa is on the northern banks of river Chitral, why the fort was not made on the southern bank is obvious when one looks at the area, The River Chitral is in fact a pass which leads to the Chitral the ancient caravan

route was on the southern bank whose remains can be seen even today thus the fort was constructed primarily to keep an eye on the route and also to guard against the Dir insurgents.

There are two forts in Drosh one is known as Chitrali Fort and other as Drosh Killa, the former has been turned into a school as back as 1937 while other remained as headquarters of Chitral Scouts for almost fifty years till 1992. Piquets are another enigma because they are only on the north and east of Fort. The fort is large, big, magnanimous and simple in construction, it is in tiers and have solid walls which are now broken and replaced with barbed wires. Originally there was only one entrance into the fort on the western side having a piquet it is disused now; a pity. There are two rings of fort, one which is uncovered by wall and other the proper fort where the gate leads you to the quarter guard and then into the fort. Presently there is another path which is for motors which can lead up to mess but one still has to climb stairs to reach to the mess. From quarter guard another inclined flight of stairs leads to the commandant office and from there to the mess. It is at quarter guard that a original wall painting has been preserved although refreshed every now and then which is a mirror of the past. It shows that almost everything on the northern bank of river belongs to Chitral Scouts and the assistant political agent who used to sit here instead of Chitral.

There are old maple and walnut trees everywhere, most strikingly the four maple trees at the four corners of the ground down below the mess building are eye catching, they are placed originally at the four corners of the ground in such a symmetry that their shadows almost covers the ground. Then there is another tree at the hockey ground which can now be called as football ground as none plays hockey now; it also shows how important hockey was in the past {1926}. This ground actually divides the whole complex of the fort, the barracks of troops are on the one side of ground and on the other these steep path takes the visitor into the fort arena.

Presently the No.3 Wing of Chitral Scouts, 42 Azad Kashmir Regiment and Mortar Battery of Chitral Scouts are sharing the fort, the infantry battalion is mainly using as the rear headquarters so are all the wings, all kind of stores are here, the Ghee, tea, match, charpoy, salt to name few are located here. There is no dearth of accommodation. The Chitral Scouts training school is also here inside the fort complex. The whole fort is inclined in construction, there is hardly any level place less the hockey ground and the stony tennis court which is adjacent to the main gate of fort.

### **Drosh Fort 1899.**

Drosh Fort's construction started in May 1899 and was completed in October 1900. The fort is on the northern bank of River Chitral, on a higher ridge overlooking the complete valley and route of River Chitral and River Madaglasht. Thus from its sitting it is obvious that main threat was from the afghans and the southern circle was the most volatile. In the ancient times the track from Bashgal in Afghanistan entered into Chitral through Arandu and then following the hill track it passes through Domel Nisar-Mirkhani-Drosh-Ayun-Chitral-Garm Chasma and then exiting through Shah Salim Pass. Thus two separate entities one on the southern bank and other on Northern Bank were flourishing. There were very few crossing points on the river and even then the hanging bridges were unable to take the full load of laden camel, horse or mule caravan, only in military expedition a force was able to cross it. In summer the river was in full fury as now and in winter the crossing was possible.

Drosh Fort is built on the ridge in a multi tier design, which is inclined, and hardly any level space is available and even less was in the past. Fort is rectangular in design having mud barracks all along the four walls; these barracks are the distinct hallmark of the fort. The wooden pier style corridor along walls are narrow yet wide enough to allow two men to cross each other. Firing points are available after every seven feet; the best part of the fort was in its rapid concentration of fire and soldiers at all time mainly due to the design. Four piquet at four corners along with equal number of small entrances built of iron doors and one main entrance, which in the past had a gigantic iron and wood door. Quarter guard is on the right side of main gate inside the fort.

First major expansion of the fort took place in 1921 after the third afghan War when new barracks were constructed and second one took place in 1939 and then in mid eighties it was almost complete in every sense when the headquarters were moved back to Chitral. Since then the fort is living in past nostalgia as lack of manpower is barely enough to keep it working.

In the original pattern the complete northern bank was only with the military and political administration. The road leading from Fort to the bridge on the River Chitral was and still is the property of Chitral Scouts and that include the complete bazaar with over two hundred shops. Now the bazaar which has sprung up along the main road is known as new bazaar and Scouts bazaar is called the old bazaar.

Initially the commandant house was inside the fort but in 1920 it was constructed outside the fort and then finally demolished in 2010 to make room for the expansion of Scouts school. Chitral scouts garden is located across the river, this is one of the largest gardens among all corps of Frontier corps, the old landing ground which was built in 1921, last had flight in 1954 and since then is abandoned and turned into a cricket field with proper brown pitch, it is a fantastic field.

Fort had three grave yards, one known as cemetery had both the Muslim and Christian military personnel's and is located at the south eastern end, the Hindu graveyard was situated a mile further east but now a days there are no remnants of that graveyard, however the other cemetery is maintained by the scouts and the army unit stationed in Drosh {they are here since 2009}.

The contractors bring fresh ration, fodder for animals, petrol and other commodities as they have been doing it for last hundred years. The Chitral Mountain Artillery is also stationed here, it has been its home base for a century and despite all other changes this has remained in vogue. Mounted infantry also originally had their birth here, the stables are still functional and the horses, mules, donkeys all live together, {mounted infantry only looks after the horses and animal transport is responsible for donkeys}.

Presently the lush green hockey field serves as football ground with daily matches being played between the asr-maghrib prayers, it is a treat to the eyes to see such colourful attires running around a ball. In the parade ground, which is now known as Murad Ground the civilians are allowed to play the games in the evening, as there are no other sports facilities available to them, similar is the attitude towards the use of cricket field.

Mountain Hospital was also at Drosh before it was also shifted to the Chitral. The present half mounting barracks were once the hospital wards, there are two such barracks, the bigger one was general ward and smaller one was bifurcated into officers' ward and offices. The operation room was built later in

1938 {present MRC}. All barracks inside have two rooms, one inner which is larger in size and other a small room, wooden planks and mud has been used in original construction and there is no trace of iron. The bricks were used later either in expansion or in restoration.

Fort from inside is all green, chinar, apple, pear trees are almost everywhere yet the four chinar trees at the four corners of the office barrack are worth appreciating; they were planted with precision and then looked after for long from grazing horses and other animals to reach such heights. They are as old as the fort itself.

### **Drosh Officers mess dining hall.**

Words at times lose their value because they are used daily and for everything thus the word impressive may look odd but this is what it feels to be sitting here at midnight when outside the yellow glow of full moon is getting pale because the moon is now up the mess, for hours in a stoned state of mind I have been staring at the two passes the pass on left the Chitral and on the right or northern leads to Madaglasht.

The hall is covered with walnut wood almost touching the ceiling all around, with hand carved fire places, shields on wall the PMA, Engineers, Punjab Regiment, FWO, head trophies of Markhor are staring from all corners with the head mascot on the southern wall kept an eye on me while I was having the dinner alone. Three silver trophies the bronze infantryman holding and charging with the bayonet rifle, the big silver bowl in the centre and traditional ibex trophy without which no room of Chitral Scouts seems to be complete. On the far end at the fire place half a dozen silver ware and a tray below the Markhor trophy, windows are on the southern side with ample space in the front to have the breakfast while having a look at the lawn and valley down below especially the Chitral Pass is in the centre. Ceiling is also made of wood panels with chandelier hanging down, two ceiling fans and two lights on each end completes the scenery.

Hall and mess are deserted now and they are in this state since 1992 when the headquarters move from here to Chitral, it looks haunted now, I sat alone in dark in the ante room and felt the company of all past visitors, I thought of Commandant Colonel Murad as what made him commit suicide, I don't believe that he was upset on his posting that speaks low of him. Did he really thought of himself as indispensable after commanding the Chitral for twelve long years, there was another commandant back in 1937-1947 but he left his post in a jovial mood so why Murad committed suicide. I have no plausible answer to his actions. Maybe he was instable like most such persons, let's not forget that he was a poet also, a bachelor, a lost love. Who knows, maybe he was insane or he was high on that night but on what that made him took his life. Sitting and looking at the Chitral pass I thought of the 'Man who would be King', it is similar to Murad's life.

Madaglasht are another enigma, who are they and how come the Persian language and customs have survived in so many years and centuries or even millenniums. Are they lost soldiers of Darius or Feroze who was running away from Alexander, is it possible that they entered from the Bashgal Valley or Arandu and instead of going into the Chitral valley they took the northern valley, similarly may be the



Alexander's soldiers took the north western valley in their chase and they ended up at the Kalash Valley. The Kalash Valley is on the opposite bank of River Chitral just across the Drosh.

The old caravan route is on the southern bank of the river the reason being that they never wanted to cross the river with laden horses and camels. Thus the whole route encompasses the southern part of present day Chitral, including the Lotkow valley leading straight to Kashkar {TirchMir}. Even the name of River Chitral is controversial , from Drosh down to Arandu it should be known as River Drosh , as River Chitral is only christened with this name after the amalgamation of river Lotkow and river Yarkhun just miles west of Chitral Town.

The Drosh has the same place in relation to Chitral what Jamrud Fort has to Khyber Pass. The Chitral starts from here and finishes at Chitral a mere 40 odd miles this is what Chitral was in past.

It is strange feeling to sit alone in a room which at some time in past had a glorious time where the presidents and prime ministers had dined and laughed, now it is haunted never to have the same glory again. The fort was constructed on 1899 and commissioned in 1900 , probably this mess was constructed then or few years later because it was almost religious to have the mess for the officers and there were few infantry battalions stationed here along with artillery pieces. From 1929 the aircraft started making landings here it must be a great day for the natives to see the aircraft coming and going. What went through their minds was it an end of the world to them or the ultimate symbol of whiter race superiority.

The PMA shield has a history because it was presented by Major General Rahat Latif Butt who came here in 1981 but he had been here in 1954 as a cadet himself , what a feeling to be at the same place where you have been there as a cadet and now as a commandant. He has written about that in the visitors book of Chitral Mess .

In the darkness and in the solitude of the night the Markhoor looks almost alive, its long hair hanging down from his chin just like an old religious man. Here the fear is not of any mortar or artillery shell as in Miranshah but that of fairies and werewolves and other such things, the place looks ideal for such ventures. What about the hidden history of the mess, the scandals the murders the gossips ,at least we know about one the murder and about others one had to run his imagination and there is no end to that.

It was Captain James of 14<sup>th</sup> Punjabis who married the local girl in 1899 on the Christmas day the background of this is that James had gone on the hunting while on leave and it was at OsiakGol that he felt down almost killing himself but was saved by a local girl who had gone out to fetch the water and she dragged him to safety , looked after him and even nursed him and that was the reason for that love story ending in such a happy ending. But the story did not finished here because next year the Captain James died while on hunting at the same place.

### **Full Moon at Drosh, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013.**

This time the full moon stretched for over three nights, first night at Chitral Officers Mess two nights ago when I spotted it and since I was monitoring it for last one week thus I was confident about it, it rose from the mountains above the mess , the wall across the River Chitral and slowly travelled over the

mess tree and making a loop came over head, playing hide and seek through the maple leaves. The Chitral town basked in its yellow glow, I text Reena about it, thought of my children and wife and mother as much of my life revolves around this full moon. In my childhood lying on the cot with my mother on the roof and watching the full moon. My aunt narrating me the stories. It was common fable that the grandma is knitting the wheel, it was called Chanda Mama. The word Chanda is since used to point towards the beloved, it is common pet name of all girls apart from gurya. Time passed by and I forgot about the full moon for decade and it was neither in military academy nor in field exercises but at Siachen in 1988 that I saw and fell in love with moon forever. I had come out of my igloo in the frozen month of January at over 18000 feet give and take few feet but I got my insignia of mountaineering there thus it was definitely over 18000 feet. The moon outside was fascinating , I pissed which was the reason of my coming out of the warm igloo and felt nirvana. Only then I saw the moon in its full glory. The mountains all around as far as eye can travel were covered in white thick cream of snow and ice. The Eagle Peak, the twin towers, the narrow cliff, the deep gorge and glacier down below were all visible and pure white. I stood there for eternity, nothing was in my mind but the sheer magnitude and magnum of beauty of nature. I was in awe of it and need not to move but at last the cold forced me to go inside. Probably next time it was blizzard and next time it was partial cloudy and that was the end of it.

Then came love affairs, one with my wife under the full moon , I was lying in a bushy stream just to have a glance of her when she would walk by at her after dinner walk with her colleague. Writing letters and reading them under full moon. Then acme the tragic part and the suffering of a lost love to be borne under the full moon. In next phase it was flying in full moon, it was always conducted in full moon conditions thus it became a second nature to be aware of it. Watching Karachi and surrounding islands on a calm full moon with sea waves touching the land, even the tortoises were visible, the city lights and the harbour, the airport's runway lights and their changing colours as one approaches them in a glide. Next it was Thailand Kohpagangan island in the arms of a German lady watching the full moon and only then I saw how the sea waves are termed as high tides and how human tides corresponds to it. Back to life and a walk under full moon with my school heart girl Reena near her hostel and the aroma of the night queen flowers. The marriage and the full moon slowly and gradually just faded away , then came children and the mountains but I think I have omitted one of the most eventful full moon , the one I saw at K-2 base camp with Pink Floyd and the hashish; it changed my life forever and I came back to it after few months and saw it again without any worry of food or place to sleep.

With my children I enjoyed it lying in the cool summer of Skardu for two seasons watching it to come from the north west of my house, I enjoyed it my pack of dogs and their pups holding them in my arms , I saw it with snow all around walking alone under its spell towards the glacier with my house behind me.

Then came Glasgow, the full moon was then my link to my past, to all my life because I had left all of it for nothing, everything was gone except this full moon, I gave night duties under its light I came back from library, club, bar under its spell. I dreamed with my eyes open when ever it was in full glory. I had it last again at Thailand with Reena and other one at Aitcheson but never again with my children and wife since Skardu. Last full moon was at Hydapass thinking about from where Alexander crossed it and then having almost five successive full moons in North Waziristan with hardly any lapse of concentration some of them were spent with the artillery duel with the miscreants going on under its light and now this one.

Now I don't think of anyone in particular, yes Reena comes to my mind my mother comes to my mind because I have seen quite of these with her lying on the cot in the village on summer nights thinking and talking of life and the beauty of it.

### **Madaglasht.**

Madaglasht is a north-western valley of Chitral or more precisely that of Drosh. Its fame is in its being Persian speaking, Persian culture, 2000 odd families living in a remote area. They are also famous for being arms manufacturer of highest esteem in the past and now for weaving and knitting woollen sweaters and socks.

I went there out of curiosity on 19<sup>th</sup> September on a public transport, I left the Drosh around 1500 hours as the jeep intend going that direction leaves the town at same time, there are two methods of going there one is the public transport which i have mentioned and there are not more than few vehicles that go there, other is to hire the public taxi mostly Toyota Binjo cars which can also take you there , the jeep fare was rupees 200 , i am not sure about the taxi fare. There are no hotels at Madaglasht and any tourist intends staying night has to lodge himself with villagers. I did not knew anybody and just a sense of adventure took me there.

The track leading to Madaglasht starts just on the northern edge of Drosh, initially the track is good as compared to other mountainous tracks but after twenty odd minutes it stars becoming ascending, narrow, stony and dangerous. The **Sheeshu** River flows all along, it has clear water which is coming from numerous brooks, fountains, springs that falls into it on regular interval. At times its bed is broad but never is it too narrow. There are villages on other side too, village is a wrong word rather few houses or even lone house perched high on mountains amidst the forest.

The journey kept on going, jumps and more jumps, one of the passenger in the rear puts his glass wrapped in a cloth behind our seat and we two sitting in the front seat did not objected to it as it is the common custom here , none complains because tomorrow it will be his turn to face the same dilemma. We had two breaks in between where the driver put water in radiator and passengers had a smoke. Most of the passengers were wearing jeans also, all in all we were twelve male passengers with no female on board..

We drove through small packets of habitation, the overall scenery was dry but after almost three hours we reached near green belt and this was start of Madaglasht area. The Madaglasht word holds true for a an area but among them one village also carry the same name which was my destination. This valley is peaceful and as such no requirement of even having a scout post. The scenery short of Madaglasht not only differs from the other in terms of the tree but also in the pattern of their graves, almost all graves were covered with wooden coffin something very peculiar to the Kafirs. I saw three shrines also one of the very first that i saw in Chitral. Jeep finally stopped at Madaglasht, a small mountainous hamlet, we stopped on the home bank of a wooden bridge , the real village is on the other side where driver took me there and we came across Naib Subedar Ali Nawaz of the Chitral scouts he is retired now since 2007. He was referred by the same scout who came to drop me at the Drosh. I was mentally ready to spend the night in the village guest room on payment but Ali took me to his home.

Ali's home is small at least from the direction through which we entered, a small lawn having fruit trees , apples and pears with few space reserved for growing up of kitchen vegetables, the river flowing next to it. Ali was busy in harvesting his field but now he left everything and just concentrated on being a host. I met his children, three in number all in toddler phase and one of them was going to school, later i learnt that Ali in total have six children, four daughters and two sons. His two elder daughters are studying science, one in class 12<sup>th</sup> and other in matric , the third one being grade seventh. His daughter Riffat who is studying in matric came and shook my hand which is something very unusual in this part of world but then this is what Persian culture is all about. She is one of the most prettiest girl i have come across in Chitral, blue eyes and fair colour with good height, very soft spoken , she sat with me and converse and I thought of my daughter who is of same age and immediately started liking her like my own daughter. I asked her many questions about her school, her family and so on. They all were speaking Persian, the young ones just jumping around but in a pleasant way, no crying or shouting or abusing. Ali's cousin a post master who has recently retired also join us and being retired we both had many commonalities. I saw Ali going out and inquired about where he is going and he pleasantly mentioned shop. I was little worried lest he purchase anything for dinner but he just calmly waved his hand and went about his a business.

I learnt that whole village is comprising of Ismaili faith Muslims and there are few Sunnis as well, i have seen one odd flag depicting the jamait uleema islam at the start of the village. I also noticed free movement of womenfolk which is s so common in Punjab but so rare in this part. Evening was now growing along, weather was bit cool{Madaglasht is at 6000 feet}. We moved inside into the hujra, a medium size room having carpet and cushions on floor , pictures of Ali Nawaz in frames in uniform adores the fire place, few religious posters but nothing unusual in any sense. The washroom very neat and clean. I inquired about the electricity and water arrangement in the village. There is a hydel power house which supplies the electricity to the village around the clock , it is less but still better than nothing. Water is agin coming from fresh water spring. There are two schools for primary education and one middle school and one college all less one are being run by the Agha Khan community welfare organisation. The teachers are good and qualified. In summer there is one month holiday in July and two months off in winter January-February. In winter there is heavy snow fall and all routes are practically blocked. The other end of Madaglasht is also blocked with just a foot track that leads to the Goolen a small village north of Chitral. Thus people can travel from here to Chitral but it is only used by foreigner trekkers; no more there due to security threats.

For an hour we played with kids, i was feeling embarrass for not having any gifts with me for the family, i gave rupees 1000 to Riffat to buy books and later gave all my change 250 rupees to the toddlers. Ali Nawaz later joins in and we talk about the militia life , he was trained as a bomb disposal expert but alter he opted for retirement as he wanted to have more time with his family. He is now looking after his meagre lands but happy and content. His elder daughter also came in to say hello , she also shook hands and exchange pleasantries so did the third daughter. Dinner was ready. The utensils were taken from this room by his two daughters and Ali helped them by putting the sheet on carpet and laying the plates. He had cooked a chicken the highest sign of hospitality, i felt bit sorry for causing him such , rice and salad along with yogurt. It was excellent cooking, delicious and very aromatic. We three males had the meal and later Ali took all the items away and i believe then others had the meal.

Postmaster narrated me that they all are Ismaili, their forefathers came from Afghanistan but their Persian is different from them, they had opted for this land. I have my own reasons to partly believe this aspect of history. Thousand years ago or at least five hundred years ago the population was very less and not more than twenty odd families must have been residing here. Why and how they came here will remain a mystery, they can also be runaway soldiers just like the people living in Kalash. Apart from their language there is nothing peculiar about them on the surface but inside this cultural variation and openness is the key to understand them.

Ali laid down elaborate bedding comprising of few mattresses and quilt. I inquired about the hand knitted sweaters and he went around and brought half a dozen of them. I bought one for rupees 1800/. Ali gave me a pair of woollen socks as a souvenir and in return I gave him my sunglasses. Night was peaceful. I left the door unlocked, a sense of fear came momentarily but it was natural and I soon overrode it and enjoyed a pleasant night rest. The vehicle in the morning leaves at 0500 hours thus I was up at 0430 when Ali came with warm water bowl for shave, soon he came with three parathas and two fried eggs along with cup of tea. His wife must have been busy in preparing them for half an hour ago. There was no time so I packed the food and Ali carried my small bag and we reached the jeep stand where despite all of Ali's protest I agreed to sit in the rear of jeep as the front seats are normally reserved for females in the valley.

It was a dangerous journey under moon light, still dark and driving through the mountainous track which is rugged and zigzagged. I was sitting on the temporary mat along with three other passengers and three were standing with the iron bars at the rear, jeep was open. I wished and sensed that safety is more in standing with your eyes facing the road as only then you can make out the progress of jeep. In my case being sitting would be a bit too late in jumping out in case jeep traversed into the river down below. These thoughts kept my mind occupied. We climbed up the steep track then down, another sharp turn and then another sharp descent and this continued for an hour before jeep started staggering and soon came to a halt, it ran out of diesel. We had practically blocked the road or track and now there were five or six other vehicles behind us, our driver got the diesel from them {six litres} by sucking through their fuel tank and this is how I reached back to Drosh by 0900 hours with very sore back yet I was full of admiration for the Ali Nawaz. I have seen the Madaglasht the Persian culture and got an insight into them.

### **Mirkhani Fort. 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

On 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013, I had left Drosh at 1500 hours for the Mirkhani, it seems difficult proposition to do so because I am lazy and if I spend a night at one place then it seems almost a miracle if I am able to leave but I had to do so. Mirkhani Fort is on main Lowari-Drosh road, it is half an hour drive from Drosh and the fort itself is visible about five minutes short of it as it stands high on a ridge overhanging the River Chitral which makes two omega bends here and then set course for Afghanistan via Dommel Nisar and Arandu.

I travelled by a public transport, I got a car taxi from Drosh, it was already full but the scout and the driver was kind to accommodate me and the elderly person sitting in front seat despite all my protests vacated the seat, I feel embarrassed over this. En route I saw the fort at Nagur which was built by the local royalty in 1929. The fort is impressive and looks like a military fort, it has one hanging bridge which

connects it with the main road, at night the bridge is closed down there is a post of scouts also to ensure this. The reason is obvious the other bank of river {southern} connects with Afghanistan and Kafiristan and as such it is closed down. In old days the Nagur was one of the key place for crossing the river.

I got down at Mirkhani Fort and introduced myself to the sentry who was courteous enough to offer me a seat in his post. The wing commander was away on a tour to post but was expected to be back before sun down. I sent a chit to the subedar major Akhtar, who after few minutes came out and took me inside. We sat in the lawn and he ordered for food and tea. Food was good, comprising of rice, mutton curry, salad, rooti and customary fruit. Mean while he arranged for my accommodation.

The fort looks very small after the Drosh Fort stay, a single storied barrack on both ends running all along. The length of fort is not more than 100 yards with a width of another fifty yards. No more wooden barracks or huts, only two exits one at the front and other at rear with another one on eastern wall which looks like make shift. One sentry piquet at the gate and that's all. I was wondering about the officers' accommodation when the sentry took my luggage and i followed him, we exit from the far gate and all of a sudden the full beauty of the fort was revealed. The area between the fort wall and the ridge which originally was meant for stables have now been converted into a beautiful garden having accommodation for troops and in 2009 a beautiful three room hut was constructed; i had one room there.

The mountain battery which came here in the aftermath of 2011 attack is now being relieved with another battery from another regiment, they are arriving today and a tea break was being arranged in their honour. I just kept sitting in the lawn of the hut enjoying the beauty of the area. Being on higher ground the view is extended, with river almost 500 feet down below making its two turns, across the bank of the river the green fields of the Nagur with few house, the fort is not visible from here {Nagur fort}. However a look down reveals the sandy beach of the river which is presently used for playing cricket. It is only now that water has receded otherwise in peak summer it covers everything down below. One thing which i have learnt here is that all old villages are on relative higher ground, much higher than normal and all new comers are the one having their houses built near the bank. Thus one can make out which locality is old and native.

Lieutenant Colonel Tauqeer the wing commander also arrived and we had a cup of tea together, the initial few moments with any commander are very important because the whole show can be made or break in these moments. But so far i have found all the officers very respectful and helpful. The other three officers were Major Ali Ahmed the battery commander of outgoing battery and two captains namely Tjdar and Fayyaz. I was also invited to join in the tea break being arranged. Typical army tea break with cold chicken, rice and salad. There was a dance and music as well.

Later at night we all four sat around the lawn, wing commander had gone to his residence which is also outside the fort his parents are on a visit these days. Major Ali turned out to be a poet of Urdu, he gave me his copy of poetry generally good. He is romantic, nature loving and like all military Urdu poets he is sensitive. He for hours recited his poetry while other two captains long ago hit the bed. Moon still came out and what a view it gave. At night i went to sleep, kind of youngsters that they gave me an independent room.

The day is routine, everyone getting up late, the sun rays are falling on the western bank of the river and the fort is still shrouded in the dim light. The lone rooster has been calling his shouts on regular

basis but with no hen in sight it calms down. I had got my first cup of tea and now waiting for the clothes to come back from dhobi. Another long yell from rooster. In the morning, i just sat out looking at the river and surroundings. Had a breakfast of paratha and omelette , then met the wing commander at 1030 for group photographs which was arranged outside the main gate, elaborate arrangements, traffic was halted for the duration. My other inquisitiveness was to meet Naik Nasir who was the lone survivor of Darashot post attack of August 2011 in which 22 scouts were killed. He was currently posted at a post but wing commander called him down for the interview.

I later roamed around with a scout as guide. There are few shops as well on the outer periphery of the fort, a custom check post and meteorological station is also located. A new mosque is being constructed by the wing also.

We all less wing commander departed for the half an hour drive to Dommel Nissar, the battery commander had to show the new officers the area thus i was lucky to have a lift in the army vehicle.

The journey from Mirkani takes almost 45 minutes of drive, the track is not that bad rather it is grand when compared to the other parts of Chitral, no dangerous curves still any novice can end up at river bed and that was one reason i sat in the rear seat amidst two captains they insisted on mine sitting in front but i regretted, and rather sat with them in the rear between two captains giving all the pleasure of window seats. The scenery is similar to any other part of northern areas, a river running along, track winding through the mountains occasional vehicles carrying wood coming from Arandu direction , i just noted only four vehicles enroute one reason is the road ahead of Dommel Nisar is closed due to mud slides. I saw the Katusi post enroute and the bridge over it which has been rebuilt by army engineers, the FWO camp and then few more turn and the fort was in sight. The rocks lying on the side of road are iron ore which is precious commodity. No shop, no village on the road; we entered the Dommel Fort. The track goes upward and then stops at a parking bay with few trucks standing, the fort gate and the silhouette of its wall, the wing commander's office which was constructed only recently by Lieutenant colonel Tauqeer stands out as a piece of architect. The maple tree has been preserved and it goes through the veranda of the office, beautiful design. The aroma of fresh pure natural wood fills the air when i entered it. Lieutenant Colonel Naveed is the wing commander, he is from artillery , slim but very cordial, jovial, humble and courteous. I glanced at the wing commanders board and saw Major Ali Imran's name over there.

Naveed is a good company and its after along that i have enjoyed conversation nothing intellectual just pure military fun, he was DQ in Lahore brigade{114} and how the things work thee , one really feels pity with the staff officers but now he is enjoying it. Another retired officer came he is working with FWO had been working in the Chitral Scouts in the past, from OTS and from COAS regiment but nothing extraordinary about him same talk about plots and other. He was narrating how he was swindle by his own course mate with his commutation . He left and then after some time we had the lunch in SM's office which is adjacent to wing commander's. Lunch was god, rice, chicken fried but good one and the standard Mountain Dew cold drink followed by the fruit of pears, apples and grapes. It was evening time the artillery offices left for Mirkani. The Dommel Nisar life is slow rather boorish and lonely and evening games seems to be the right recipe for it; they play volleyball the king of troops games.

Volleyball is an excellent game requires little space and over sixteen players can play. Not smashing but gentle hitting, players keep on coming and joining the teams , one team led by the captain and soon wing commander also joined in both good players. Game lasted till Maghreb prayers when nit was called off.

I did not consumed my dinner rather went to work and slept around midnight.

### **Dommel Nisar.**

It is 1930 hours , at Dommel Nisar Fort, the fort was constructed in 1942, it is bigger than Mirkani but much smaller than Drosh. It is double storied, cemented brick, thick 20 odd feet high walls with high Iron Gate on one end and a small exit at the other end. It is 200 yards by 50 yards in a straight plain rocky ground with river Chitral running along its western wall separated by a narrow stony track. On the further far bank which in this case becomes the west bank or far bank is inhabited by two odd families with half a dosen females working in the small elongated field wearing red chaddar{only 30% }. The fort is constructed in a elongated pattern mainly due to the dictate of the ground thus you end up facing the rather gradual high mountain wall. On the southern end the River Chitral takes its rather second last bend and merges to the west. On the east is that is the back of the fort the again high hillock blocks the view and provides protection; the plenty of high maple trees which by any standard are not older than a century almost obscure the view.

I can hear the consistent and persistent yet pleasant noise of river water running fast , it is regularly interrupted by the prayer calls on the loud speaker, here it is really penetrating as there is no other noise to over run it , the water flow on the other hand provides a back ground medley. The prayer call is brief and to the point. Dommel Nisar is the in centre between the Mirkani & Arandu , it is the last fort built by British on this River Chitral axis, ahead are the posts like Langurbat and then Arandu, on the northern side coming from Mirkani the road is excellent but alas only for a brief distance but FWO is working on the widening of the road till Arandu with UAE sponsorship which certainly will bring a strategic change both economically and culturally; defence is debatable because with the construction of road coupled with the opening of Lowari Tunnel the centuries old issue will be resolved, a loop is thus being provided to the Afghans and people living in Central Asia to move freely southward through Arandu Pass via Dommel Nisar-Mirkhani, turning left and moving through Lowari in winter too. It is the shortest, safest and most economical route from the Mughul heartland crossing Oxus and then instead of moving through Broghul into Chitral and then crossing Darkot Pass towards the Gilgit and into Kohistan before hitting river Indus. Other route traditional route is through Zebak- following Bashgol Valley into former Kafiristan and present Nuristan of Afghanistan , hitting Arandu at Birkot. The earlier caravan had no option but to follow the river which now is known as Kunar and hitting Jalalabad or the Kabul- Kunar conflux which roughly 100 miles south of Arandu enters into plains of Peshawar; the Khyber Pass. The major limitation in the past were the militant and often hostile tribes who each eyed the trade caravan as a booty , they as honourable tribesmen merely preferred the caravans to pass through their territory and in return getting the security toll. Now this all has taken new dimension; the sectarian vermin, the majority of population living near Oxus is the follower of shia and Ismaili sect which the Sunni tribes of Nuristan,



Kunar, Jalalabad, Kabul, Bajaur, Khar, and Dir are not very friendly; unfriendly is rather a very diplomatic word because much of present day violence in the area is mainly and chiefly attributed to this madness along with historical variations.

Dommel Nisar was constructed mainly for any Afghan threat and not the perceived Russian threat. Drosh was constructed in 1900 and Mirkani in 1940 thus in between these years the major and only serious conflict after the signing of Durand Line Pact in 1893; was the Third Afghan War of 1919. Mirkani- Dommel Nisar Axis is rather the exhibition ground of great game and there is no solid logic to deny the perception that almost thousand years ago the similar defensive fortification and strategy was adopted by the Kafirs against the invading Aryans and later Turk Muslims, the only pint of difference is on the choice of banks of river as the line of fortifications. Even today the old track route is visible on the far bank which is the edge of kafirs homeland , the Kafiristan.

Dommel Nisar remained a quite, isolated, lonely place where time seems to have stand still since it was constructed, it was awoken after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and the thousands of Afghan refugees entering into Chitral through this one route as all others were desolated. These Afghans made mud villages along the banks where ever it was available, those were the days that world was in favour of them and the people of Chitral welcomed them with open heart after all they were brothers; mostly. In 1962 Pakistan had exchanged the territory with Afghanistan, gaining the General Ayub ridge where a post bears his name across a mile in Torkham and in return giving them the area in Dost Muhammad which is across Arandu. Thus with this act the few hundred odd families all of a sudden found themselves as part of another passport, currency and laws. As a convention these people all along the Durand Line are given right to move freely across the border. At dost Muhammad the situation is no different, there are 40 odd men of Arandu who daily go across the border to open their shops in Afghanistan by crossing over the bridge, reciprocally there are average 20 odd families visit Pakistan daily just for medical purpose.

After sunset the Fort's lone gate is closed and life begins inside the fort , the mosque is outside the fort and it is only the Isha prayers which keeps the gate open. The additional battery of mortars and gun s have extended the fort southward with new mud boundary wall coming up, this all took place after the attack of august 2009 which was mainly, chiefly along Mirkani-Dommel Nisar-Arandu axis. Miscreants the Afghans came from the west across the river, they descended down from mountain after darkness making use of lapse of security at .....Bridge which was kept open contrary to the age old convention of closing. Three posts were attacked physically and all others including the Dommel Nisar and Mirkhani Forts were put under fire attack to keep them down there by restricting the reinforcements and gaining time. On that deadly night 22 Chitral Scouts embraced shahadat with Sepoy Nasr Minallah standing alone in his post for well over thirty hours and there by stalling the grand plan of the attackers. After this incident army moved in to plug the gaps and to act as a deterrent potent force, artillery battery ex 101 Mountain regiment commanded by Major Ahmed Nawaz was the first one to move in with their headquarters at Mirkani , having observers at Dommel Nisar anda hed. One of the Northern Light Infantry regiment{3} also moved in followed by 42 AK and 33 Baluch Regiment whose commanding officer along with general officer commanding 17 Division embraced shahadat in an IED blast on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

Day starts with Fajr prayers and then slowly moved in , most of the strength is deployed on post thus remaining have to act as reserve and provide administration efforts. There is no fax machine and mail

official comes through Mirkani which is collected at past ten hundred hours. The wireless communication works perfectly both for official and private talk. Water is in abundance due to the spring as river water is muddy in summer. Electricity is also provided through hydel and also from Shushi power house. Dry ration is collected from Drosh Fort and fresh ration is supplied by contractor.

**2130 hours.** I had just ventured out and spotted the fort door ajar with no sentry visible this is dangerous. These small lapses of security can cost very dearly, i have fail to understand that how these fine men and fine officers can be so callous about the security. This dilemma is everywhere especially in corps like Chitral having an area so large that commandant is unable to keep an eye but it is not the commandants job either it is the wing commander's responsibility. In the morning when we came to Dommel Nisar and i mean myself, Major Ahmed Nawaz and two young captains, none of us was armed and that is a very bad message for the youngsters. There were gunmen in the rear but officers were not armed and none was carrying water. Anyway i have locked my room from inside but it is of no use in case of attack.

Back to Mirkhani. After a night stay at Dommel Nisar i was back to Mirkhani. In the morning i had the group pictures of the wing taken . The wing also had made elaborate arrangements for the pictures, i have found these scouts to be picture happy. All weapons were laid out even the mortar shells were there. I later took more pictures of the Chitral Scouts mortar battery, the scouts were in track suits but i made it clear that only those pictures which are operational will be published so they happily change into uniform just for the pictures.

I walked out of the fort with one regimental police scout accompanying me. I enquired about the local population but he was almost blank. We walk and i notice the movement in the house across the river bank, there were few women carrying out house chores like running after the goats, children. On our way we after five minutes walk came across the village Dommel , it has one school in which the Chitral Scouts education staff also teaches on voluntarily basis. The same wooden structure is also used as mosque and as a madrassa. The teacher also joins us and soon he called the local teacher too. The Dommel Nissar literally means a resting place. The whole area is overwhelmingly Afghan in culture and even language here is Pashtu instead of Chitrali. People are adherent of Sunni sect and very conservative in outlook. However i noticed the women working in field. This valley is different from the rest of Chitral. In the madrassa there was a notice displaying in which all those who have missed the prayers wee warned not to do so and they were fined too. The area is famous for its grapes. The school boys who are studying in higher classes have to walk almost three miles to attend at Lachi Gran and they were back now. These students after coming back from school first offer prayers and then go home, have lunch comprising of a bread and few fruits, vegetables are rare here. Then they attend the religious teaching and then an hour of games comprising of football or cricket. Majority of them when they come back had to tend the sheep and other chores of home. The teacher also increased my knowledge by stating that the piquet of the fort high up on the ridge was a Hindu raja's fort in old days , he further stated that while constructing his house he came across buried items but nothing expensive in them.

At Mirkhani, I met Naik Nisar and later we both went to have a talk at the Tuck shop outside the fort. This shop was recently commissioned by Lt Col Tauqeer who has a knack for constructing and doing it within time. This shop is his idea and an excellent one. Presently it lacks wash room but it is on hand to construct two washrooms one for ladies and other for males. One really has to travel by road to

comprehend the value of this shop. I recall when i was coming to Chitral few months ago with Major Kayani and his friends we were really looking for a place to rest and have a cup of tea. Crossing of Lowari takes its toll on every one.

## **28<sup>th</sup> September, Drosh.**

Yesterday it was the **Bara Khana** of Lieutenant Colonel Naeem, he is going back to army after one year stay with No.3 Wing. He has served with them rather led them in Bajaur for six months and six months here at Drosh. On 27<sup>th</sup> September when I came back to Drosh from Mirkhani and had all my intention of going back to Peshawar but i stayed for this baara khana. It was decided on the spur of the moment.

Baara khana is a tradition in which the outgoing commander is given a farewell dinner by the troops , it is done by saving the ration especially the meat and then having a feast. In my days of army the standard and scale of ration in army was rather low as compared to the present scale moreover the ration scale of Frontier corps is much higher than army. The new wing commander Lt Col Burhan is from 42 AK Regiment which he has commanded and from there he has posted to Chitral Scouts; the regiment is also deployed around Drosh thus military band from the regiment was arranged which came and from noon started playing various tunes.

Dress code for bara khana is usually white kameez shalwar with black waist coat and shoes. Wing Commanders from Dommel Nissar, Mirkhani were there Lt Col Sarfraz of No.6 Wing at Garm Chasma was also there so were two three staff officers, subedar majors of wings and the corps subedar major. They had come from Chitral{on official vehicles}. The ground was well lit and seating arrangements were made.

I met almost all, now the subedar majors know me and we had small talk about the history and their area. The food was good but it was not that rich as i had expected rather bit low and one reason which i ponder was that for baara khanna one has to plan few days in advance; it is also possible that this was the standard. Again referring to army fables; the good baara khanna is the one in which legs of lamb or goat are roasted; they were not here tonight.

Chitrali music after the dinner was good, artillery officers from Mirkhani also joined in rather bit late as Captain Tajdar narrated that they thought that dinner is in their honour thus they were late. Subedar Akhtar of Mirkhani enrich my knowledge about Chitrali Sitar by stating that it is made by three companies all based in his village Sonoghar. He also commented on the various tunes which were being played. Chitrali music is soft in nature and so is the dance which was being performed by the various Scouts at random. Dance is slow but it gathers momentum, each tune was of two or three minutes. Dancer had slow body movement and wiggling of body but nothing lewd and nothing very fast all in all soothing and relaxing but all this changed with an army soldier of 42 AK jumping in and to my opinion rather disturbed the scout's rhythm but it was part of game.

In the end the farewell speech of wing commander and giving of gifts by the wing and other wings, they all were carpets mostly hand woven; nothing to wing by the outgoing wing commander. Later

a melee of dance in which all officers also joined in, the two bands the army and scouts small party playing together with no clear music but it was fun. In the end the wing commander was towed by ropes while he was sitting in the jeep being driven by the new wing commander and troops pulling the ropes. Captain Tajdar narrated that only last year in Kashmir one such vehicle toppled over the rocks while it was being towed . Classic Murphy Law.

## **EPILOGUE. A Convoluted History of Chitral.**

After almost a fortnight and with excessive studies, interviews, travelling and observing I have reached certain key notes about Chitral. The people as a thumb rule do not talk about their history and when they do talk it is nothing more than what is written about Chitral by the Chitralis which primarily revolves around the princes or royal history; something very similar to England.

Primarily there are two distinct river namely the Yarkhun and TirschMir or Lotkow which confluence just a mile upstream at Chitral, the rivers which are joined by many small tributaries which all are fresh water glaciated water or spring , compartmentalises the state into varying valleys but mainly the north & south. Religiously people of Chitral have Kafir among them and there is no logic not to believe that majority of population at one time was Kafir. The upper Chitral is predominantly Ismaili by faith and lower Chitral is Sunni. Upper Chitral have influence of Tajikistan, Badkshan and Pamir where as the lower Chitral is under the influence of pathan culture or Kunar culture which creeps up stream through the Chitral river. Historically there were two major ruling dynasties the rais which were ruling Chitral from 1000 -1530 AD and Kator which through a coup d eta came into power in 1530 AD, it coincides with Mughul rise to power and kators as such are linked with the Mughuls. These two ruling classes have bitter and bloody history trail like all other princely houses all over India or for that matter in world.

Socially the society comprises of the ruling families known as adamzads, arbabzads come next in ladder followed by the fakir & maskin. This is the issue as no one will admit that he is from lowest rug. Then there is religious factions and persecutions; as late as in 1926 when the Mehtar carried out an all out effort to convert the Ismailis living in upper Chitral into sunnism , it happened after his hajj. The persecution was stopped only after the intervention of British political officials.

The 3000 odd Kafir living on the southern bank of River Chitral are another enigma, they at one time between 1000-1300 AD were powerful rulers of Chitral although no unified command yet they have a history of standing up to the Mughuls and later to the Afghans, however in the end they were almost exterminated in 1895 but managed to hold on to a narrow strip of land in lower Chitral. Majority of these Kafir embraced Islam and are known as sheikhs in society. Their women still stroll the Chitral bazaar wearing colourful attire hardly anyone can point out a Kafir man as he wears no distinct dress item.

Headgear is very important as is seen in all along Durand Line, Chitralis wear white headgear made of Chitrali Patti, Swati also wears the same design and so does Gilgitis and even Mahsuds wear the same kind of headgear with minor design and wearing pattern. A Pathan seldom wears this headgear he has its own white skull cap in summer, Gilgiti cap is similar in cloth but it is smaller in circumference and it does not have the cloth hanging out from the edges as in case of Chitralis. There is only difference in cloth as far as the Swati is concerned and also the colour, Swati wears rather grey colour.

### **Polo & Music.**

Polo in true sense is the identification of Chitral , it is played here in almost all village ‘maidan’ the way it was invented and was played millenniums ago; no rules. Polo took birth in Central Asia with the domestication of this fine specimen of animal, the horse . These mountainous breed was and is still regarded as the best in the world in terms of stamina and intelligence. Key to success of Aryan was their mastery and love for horse, they initiated the very first Blitzkrieg in the history almost 1000 BC and kept rolling by Mongols and Turks most famous being Mahmud of Ghazna, Chengiz Khan, Halugu Khan, Tamerlane and Babar of Fergana. Game itself originated as a thrill & fun which comes up naturally when Aryans felt the speed, excitement and competitiveness while galloping on the steppes. Mongols particularly Tamerlane was fond of playing it with the skulls of the vanquished. Buzkashi is the only other game which can rival Polo fervor. It is another strange twist of history that both these games are played in traditional pattern {which is nothing other than living natural} only in Hindu Kush{Badakshan, Chitral & Gilgit}. Polo is not played in Badakshan and Buzkushi is unseen in Chitral.

During summer which is short but warm , at evening one comes across Polo players trotting through Shahi Bazar towards one of the three Polo Grounds in Chitral, same scene can be seen in almost all villages of upper Chitral. Grounds are uneven, barely wide and long enough in high mountainous altitude of Chitral to allow any kind of safety to the horses, players or spectators. It is like an arena, small few feet high stony walls with sheer falls, defiles, gushing water from gols, back ground of mountain, centuries old maple or walnut trees adding to the scenery. There is no restriction on number of players, game duration lasts for 45 minutes to one hour without any change or rest for horse or player. There is no protective headgear or clothing, you just sit on the horse and gallops after the ball, hit it as far as as you can{ that is if other team players allow you to come even near the ball}. Pushing the horse, blocking the shot, cutting the line is all fair. In fact Polo is the most Gentlemen game in true sense, the opponents test you but intention is never to hurt or harm the player or horse. On 14<sup>th</sup> September 1981 Subedar Sultan Ali Shah had a fatal blow during a polo match between Chitral Scouts and a local team, he took his last breath at 1330 hours on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1981.

Music is another important segment of local life and especially no Polo game is complete without the presence of two instruments the drum and flute. They are soft in nature and provides perfect ambience to the occasion. Spectators sitting on the walls practically feel the heat of horses, their eyes remained glue on the ball for their own safety. When a player scores a goal then he picks the ball and strikes back towards other end, it has its own glamour. The player taking the shot after the goal does it with his own signature tune’ Tampuq’. The musicians knows it and when the sound travels in air it lets the mother, sister, wife and other beloved ones who have not been able to witness the game to know that he has scored a goal. Surnai , Damama and Dhool are three main music instruments for dances, Sitar and duff are for vocal programme. Ponwar is the welcome tune for guests, Jangwar is military tune played while going for war. Bari Waziwar & Shahbaz are tunes to start a ceremony, Shustwar is played on marriages while Ghalwar is a call to all to gather for polo match , Alghaniwar is Pathan style dance tune while Dani is a highland style of dance music and in the end Suzi is played to mark the end of ceremonies.

Shandur annual Polo match between Chitral & Gilgit is a classic, at 12000 feet high plateau which connects and act as the natural, historical and administrative boundaries of these two rival riparian mountainous cultures The River Gilgit & River Chitral {Yarkhun}. It started in 1903 and oral history traces a love string behind it, one of the princesses condition of marriage was ‘the one who wins at Shandur’ . another oral tradition traces its back ground to ancient times when the village democracy resorted to Polo for arbitration rather than the violence. { Chitral & Gilgit have one of the lowest crime rate in the region}. In one of the epic matches which natives still love to talk about was on 28<sup>th</sup> august 1966, final was played between the Chitral Scouts and Northern Scouts, it was won by the Gilgit team, who had earlier defeated the Chitral Scouts in the preliminary match as well ‘ Gilgitis were no doubt better than us in every department of the game and it is a fact that we have to learn a lot from them’<sup>15</sup>. In that year {1966} polo season galloped off on 12<sup>th</sup> October, Chitral Scouts entered two teams, first team was headed by commandant Lieutenant Colonel Shaukat Sultan which fought its way to finals but eventually lost to the all times winner Zagrazar, the deputy commissioner’s team comprising of natives. The other polo team of Chitral Scouts lost in opening match to Balach another local team. This was Lieutenant Colonel Shaukat Sultan’s alst polo tournament as he was posted back to army in November 1966 after completion of his tenure, ‘ He was our commandant, infact a very special commandant, but it is as an elder brother that we miss him and shall remember him most’<sup>16</sup>. He was replaced with an equally special commandant, Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Sher Khan, Sitara I Jurat.

1986 Polo match at Shandur was historic , President of Pakistan General Zia Ul Haq graced the occasion and Chitral Scouts commandant Lieutenant Colonel Murad Nayyar was the man behind this. Since then it has become the most prestigious event in world Polo calendar. It is played between Chitral Polo Team and Gilgit Polo Team. At Shandur Polo is played in most natural manner, duration is 45 minutes without any break, player cannot change his pony, a pony has to sustain the entire duration. If a player gets injured then other player can replace him but pony will not be change; on the other hand if pony himself becomes injured than the opponent team has to play with one less player. It is in fact a test of horse and rider both in stamina and endurance apart from intelligence.

Chitral is not famous for horses, they all come from Badakshan in past and now from Punjab.; thus it is logical to conclude that where as Polo originates from Persian speaking Aryans the Buzkashi belongs to Turk. Within Chitral , Polo is played in upper Chitral only which is more Persian oriented culture, in lower Chitral, it is rarely seen. Kafirs have no tradition of playing Polo and neither it is played in the former Kafir valleys. Game is alive in Chitral, it is not dying neither its future is in danger. It is the pride of Chitral, Chitral Scouts and natives are keeping it alive; it provides them much needed adrenalin in a non violent manner.

## Headgear

Chitrali head gear is very peculiar and the identity of the area it is part of Chitral Scouts ceremonial uniform. Every visiting army chief has worn it notably President General Zia Ul Haq, General Waheed Kakkar and President General Mushhaarff. Lady Diana has adorned it so has Prince Karim Agha

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<sup>15</sup> Frontier Corps Newsletter 1966, Chitral Scouts, page 31.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Khan. It is part of uniform, now a day is it worn on ceremonial occasions. The cap itself is made of Chitrali cloth and the Village Mogh near Garrm Chasma is famous for its quality. Cap is made custom, taking the measurement of the head and then cap is sewn; it is available readymade as well. In Chitrali language it is called 'Pakool'. The plume is made of duck which is known as Mundhaqq in local language, it is a seasonal bird, however from 2002 onwards the use of natural feather has been prohibited keeping in view the endangered specie. The plume now is artificial, however the original plume is known as Putch in Chitrali language.

The cap is white in colour, which is rolled up consuming more than a meter of cloth, presently it is not issued free of cost to the scouts they have to purchase it from open market where it can cost 250-500 rupees. The Gilgit Scouts have identical headgear also the only difference is in the way of making the cap, Chitrali cap is more heavy and have more twinges as compares to the Gilgit Scouts ; which is bit narrow and its top cloth does not spill over the rim. Mahsuds wear the same kind of headgear with minor design and wearing pattern. A Pathan seldom wears this headgear he has its own white skull cap in summer. Mahsud style of putting on cap is distinct, they place it in middle of head {Ahmed Shah Mahsud 'Lion of Panjsher' made it famous}. The Chitral Scouts mascot is Markhoor which is again an endangered specie now; It has distinctive cloth background which denotes the wing colours {presently there are six wings in Chitral Scouts}

### **Language.**

All Chitralis are not same, their faces, colour of eyes are different and so are their customs and traditions, however the language and religion is the biggest binding and after it the Chitral Scouts bondage is the most powerful institution in the Chitral. Khowar is the language of Chitral River from snout till Mirkani in the south with varying dialect, in its pure form it is being spoken in the upper Chitral in Mulkhaw and Torkhaw area ; ironically it does not have any written characters thus Persian remained the official language since early days later replaced by Urdu and English. Khowar is like Urdu because it is also a combination of Persian, Turkish and Sanskrit language. Till mid seventies a journal in Khowar language was monthly published by the Government of Pakistan to promote the language. In Lotkow, Madaglasht and Kalashgum the dialect is different. Persian is still spoken and understood by the aristocracy in the Madaglasht in the Shishikuh Valley, Yudgah is spoken in upper Lotkow Valley above Parabek, Dangarik or Palola is spoken in Ashret, Kalkatak, Beroi and Nastiwar or Gawarbat is the language of Arandu. These varieties of language when seen in the context of the Waziristan which has much more area but only two dialect reinforces the theory that Chitral has been abode of many races and cultures which with the passage of time adopted a working pattern rather amicably. The abundance of fresh water and green pastures all along the various streams provided a solid logic against the utter use of violence for the land as observe in the Waziristan.

### **Hunting & Fishing .**

Chitral is famous for the hunting, fishing and bird shooting. It is a migratory station for the Siberian birds and as much are much awaited by all. The hunting has its own customs and traditions in

chitral, men spent much money in the hunting season often falling into debt as well. The main cost is in the construction of a hunting piquet at the river and other lakes. Hunter then sits inside it at early morning, float the decoys and then it is a matter of patience before cranes start landing. In summer almost everyone carries a fishing stick/rod and fish is also available in market. The protein requirement of natives is thus fulfilled through this activity. Big sport is highly restricted and permit is very expensive, snow leopards are quite common sight.

## **Chitral Scouts and War against Militancy. 2001-2014.**

### **History of Chitral Scouts Wings**

The basic organization of a fighting unit in Chitral Scouts is a wing which is equivalent to a light infantry battalion commanded by a lieutenant colonel. It has a strength of 640 men, organized into four companies each company having three platoons and each platoon having three sections, ten men makes one section. Each wing has its own headquarters commanded by a lieutenant colonel, subedar major is the senior most officer from junior commissioned officers. Each wing is mobile, lightly equipped, armed with light integral weapons and transport. Each wing has its own colour which is depicted on the shoulder titles and cap patch. Wings rotate among the forts of Chitral for a stay of two years in each. Inter posting among the wings for the scouts can take place only with the permission of commandant; usually a scout spent all his service in one wing

**1 Wing:** Senior most wing of Chitral Scouts, it was known as No.13 Wing and in 1990 was reverted to its old and present designation. Veteran of 1919 and Kashmir Wars. In June 1999 it entered the operational area in Kargil. Since 2000, the wing was deployed in Dir Maidan operation where it was placed under command Dir Scouts since September 2009.



## 2 Wing

It was an integral part of Chitral Scouts, in 1989 its designation was changed from No.14 Wing to No.2 Wing. It has served at Arandu, Warsak, Mirkani, Drosh and Chakdara. Wing has also served at FCNA, {Chilas 1993, Piun, September 1994, Hamzagond May 1999 and Piun June 2002}. In June 2007 No.2 Wing replaced No.3 Wing at Swat, headquarters were established at Kabal. Nasr performed duties with headquarters and later another five months at a post at Sarsanai. From here the scouts moves to Tutain Banda with a Baluch Regiment, the post was almost attacked daily by the snipers which took the life of Lance Naik Qadir Khan and seriously wounded Sepoy Tahir Shah. Apart from snipers the post was subject to suicide attack as well. Post commander Subedar Muhammad Daud and Naib Subedar Shehr Gulab displayed extraordinary display of leadership and kept the morale high. Another volatile post was at Ayub Bridge, it was attacked by an explosive laden suicide vehicle which caused shahadat of Sepoys Wali Khan, Haji Rehmat and Imtiaz with further ten more scouts getting wounded. Later the wing was move to Bajaur. On 7<sup>th</sup> January 2008 seven persons of the wing deployed at Ziarat Post died when they all acme under an avalanche.

In October 2010, the wing moves back to Mirkhani. (Chitral).

**3 Wing:** No.3 wing was raised on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1986 and re-designated as No.3 Wing in 1989. Wing has served under FCNA in August 1991-1992, May 2000- June 2001; from where it was rushed to Kitkot in Bajaur. during the Pakistan-India escalation in 2001, the Wing remained deployed t Baddomallhi in Punjab for over three months. Earthquake relief operation in 2005 was actively participated by the wing at Shangla, Ghari Hhabib Ullah and Manshehra. 3 Wing was ordered to move to Swat on a very short notice in September 2007. Initially wing was deployed in Mingora and surroundings. Later wing was deployed within area of responsibility of three army infantry brigades while wing headquarters was established at Kabal. Security of two main bridges (Ayub and Shamoza Bridge) was the responsibility of wing. Besides number of cordon and search operations, one suicidal vehicle was also identified and destroyed with bombers on 18 December 2007. The wing is in Bajaur Agency operation under command Bajaur Scouts since Oct 2010.

**4 Wing:** The wing was raised in 1986 as No.16 Wing and later re-designated to present in 1989. In 1992 the wing was placed under command FCNA for two years where it served at Siari, Olding and Hamzigund sectors. A year of internal security at Gilgit in 1998 and another at Bajaur in 1999 before taking over the Mirkani Fort from No.5 Wing in April 2001. In May 2003 the Wing again move into FCNA for a year. Wing has been in Milward (Khyber Agency) and performed operational duties in a very befitting manner from September 2007 – October 2009. Wing also took part in the bloody battle of Inayat Qilla in Bajour, February 2009.

**5 Wing:** The wing performed their duties in Swat and Dir Maidan Operation very well. It spent better half of 2001 in FCNA again moved into FCNA in August 2004. In 2008 Wing was

deployed at Chakdara however its two companies were deployed at Shakas Fort in Bara Valley. This wing started advance on 26 April 2009 from Timergara and cleared area up to Lal Qila, heavy exchange of fire took place with miscreants and eight scouts including one junior commissioned officer embraced shahadat on same day. Incident took place at Hayasarai {Lower dir} on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2009. Wing despite the heavy casualties stood on its ground. In another incident near Kaladak on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009, an IED caused four fatal casualties. Kalapni Post also took its toll when two scouts embraced shahadat on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2009. Another scout of the wing serving with Special operation Group {SOG} Naik Hakim embraced shahadat near Rustam on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2009. Before coming to Drosh in 2013, wing had served at Chakdara and Bajaur..

**6 Wing** 6 Wing was raised on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1989 at Drosh with Major Afzal as the first wing commander. They were stationed at Chakdara before taking part in Bara operation {1990} followed by Malakand Operation {1991}. It served in FCNA from August 1997 – September 1998 and had another tour of duty in the same operational area in June 2006. After two years of stay at Mastuj it was inducted in Dara Adam Khel in 2009 and remained actively deployed till May 2012.

## WAR AGAINST MILITANCY

Chitral Scouts is actively participating in the ongoing operations against terrorism since last three years. Chitral Scouts has kept its flag high in all operational areas i.e. Swat, Bajaur, Spina Thana (Dara Adam Khel), Dir Maidan and Orakzai Agency. Chitral comparatively had remained safe from the flames of terrorism. On 12<sup>th</sup> July 2007, Mortar battery of Chitral Scouts was inducted in Bajaur and two months later No.4 Wing and two companies of No.5 Wing move from Chitral to Fort Milward in Bara Valley under command mahsud scouts. These were the two initial deployments of Chitral Scouts as part of war against terror. In October 2007 No.3 wing along with one company each from No.4, 5 and No.2 Wings left Chitral for taking part in Operation Mountain Viper in Swat. At that time Chakdara Fort was under occupation of No.5 Wing Chitral Scouts. During Operation Mountain Viper, no less than eight posts were being manned by the wing which included Landakai, Birikot, Birikot Top, Ghundai, Ghalagai, Gora Tai, Gamin Bridge and Churchill Post. Both wings of Chitral Scouts {No.3 Wing at Swat and No.5 Wing at Chakdara} performed exceptionally well. Balagram, Kanju, Kabal and Ayub Bridge are now part of Chitral Scouts history. The pattern of insurgency revolved around keeping the roads open and maintaining the morale of civilian population and own military through aggressive patrolling and show of force. Sepoy Mohsin Ali was injured at Kabal and havildar Buzurg Muhammad embraced shahadat at Kabal on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2008 when miscreants

launched attack on their post while No.2 Wing was in the process of relieving No.3 Wing at Kabal.

Eight scouts were injured on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2008 at Kabal, due to miscreants launched attack on Banda post, this post again came under attack on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2008. In November the very first suicide attack on Chitral Scouts was launched, on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2008 at 20150 hours a suicide vehicle blew itself at Ayub Bridge Post.

Operation Sirat Ul Mustaqeem started in Khyber Agency on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2008 and No.4 Wing participated in it where as one company of No.6 Wing was deployed at Bajaur. On the very first day of 2009, Naik Hamid Khan and Sepoy Rehmat Gul were abducted near Batagram, they were later shot dead by the miscreants

It was in August 2011 when hell broke loose in lower Chitral when the physical attack was launched by the Afghan Bashgol. Chitral Scouts is organised into six wings, with a mountain artillery battery and mounted infantry as integral components. Overall command is with a colonel who acts as Commandant. Chitral Scouts was the first corps to have a colonel as commandant. Each wing is commanded by a lieutenant colonel, having four companies each commanded by a subedar. Although these companies should be commanded by regular officers but there is always a shortage of them. Furthermore each company comprise of four platoons each having three sections. Platoons are commanded by a havildar. Strength of a wing varies from 600-690 scouts. These wings rotate after three-four years among the various stations in Chitral like Drosh, Mirkhani, Dommel Nisar, Mastuj, Chitral and Garam Chashma. They manned posts which are outlying like Broghul Pass, practically they have posts on every pass and in every valley. Task of post vary for instance the posts along Drosh-Mirkhani-Dommel Nisar and Arandu have more concentration towards anti-smuggling role where as in Broghul and Shah Salim Pass they are more like listening post. These are in fact the symbol of state. These posts provide search and rescue in winter, disseminate education & medical to locals; overall peace and tranquillity seldom required any scout action in the area.

The pattern and conduct of war is unconventional, miscreants are small in number and mostly based in Waziristan, from there it slowly and gradually started affecting adjoining areas. These miscreants are not under any uniform command rather it is the last two hundred years of history being repeated again. Dir, Swat, Buner were the strongholds of Ahmed Shah Barelvi's followers {1825-1860} and they had nothing to do with the Wazirs. Violence in Kurram and Orakzai Agency {Orakzai Agency was carved out of Kurram in 1974} is mainly around sectarianism. Bajaur was also once part of Khyber Agency and violence has its roots in Afghanistan. But by and large the violence is restricted to Pashtu speaking areas and even more prominently in tribal agencies. Maulana Fazalullah of Swat is the one calling the shots in the area.

Violence within Chitral has always been restricted to the Arandu-Drosh axis with the exception of 1926 when Lotkow and upper Chitral were targeted by the Mehtar on religious grounds. Mostly it is the Afghan issue which is the root cause, the issue again is not at national or international level rather it is the local geography & history which is the firewood of the violence. 18<sup>th</sup> Century campaigns for conquest of land or the crown or even that of egos have almost exterminated in last fifty odd years. The Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1977 was a big test but even then Chitral was a normal district. Russian used to bomb Arandu and Drosh but no physical attack was launched either by them or the Afghans or the Bashgol on their behalf.

In last twenty years the sectarianism has emerged as the biggest threat to the tranquillity of millenniums in Chitral. Sunni, Shia & Ismailis have been living here in such harmony which only recently was matched only by Gilgit but peace has gone from areas east of Chitral. Similarly not long ago, only few years ago the foreigners were roaming in the bazaars of Chitral, lone woman travelling at night with porters, scholars coming from around the world to explore the Kalash Valley; all this including the mega projects like Lowari tunnel and Goleen Hydel power project are now under threat of miscreants attacks.

Chitral Scouts Artillery Battery, mortar battery, signal platoon, military platoons have all been supporting the operations against the militancy. It is the beauty of Chitral Scouts that despite all the ongoing operations the life still maintains its normal pace. Schools have been upgraded, houses for shaheed have been constructed, constructing parks for children, conducting the annual Polo at Shandur{it was not held in 2013 }, sports tournament, promotions of scouts, training for recruits, dine out of officers and subedars, expansion, extension, preservation of forts and old heritage. Free medical camps for the local and providing protection to all the major projects in Chitral. Protection, promotion and nurturing of Kalash people & culture is also part of Chitral Scouts .

### **Athanasius of Bambouret . September 2009.**

Kafirs of Kalash claims to be descendent of Greeks and it is very much possible also because Alexander The Great after his retreat had divided the India into two of his lieutenants who remained in power for another three hundred years . The way to Oxus from Indus or vice versa has to pass through the Kafiristan; not necessarily the Chitral River. Thus Greeks or Hellias as they call themselves now have developed a cultural heritage with them , it serves both as Greeks are also looking for something to revive its old glorious history and Kafirs looking for more attention. Greeks have developed the museum, water supply in the Bhumbirit which is the largest of Kafir village, community toilets and few other minor things. Mr Lerounid Athanasius was one such person who was living in the village since 2002. On 7/8 September 2009 at midnight, two men overpowered the Head Constable Zafar who was there as part of security to Athanasius; heading four men. It is worth mentioning that not before these, had ever any

policeman stayed a night here because of the crime situation. They at times would close the police station at sunset, hand over the keys to the local headman and then come back in the morning after. Zafar died when he hit the ground, other two policemen were injured and Mr Athanasius was taken away.

Chitral Scouts platoon under the command of Major Naseeb arrived at first light , all bridges and tracks leading to Afghanistan were sealed, border police was alerted and local jirga was called and addressed by Major Naseeb. Residents of Bhumbirit, Ayun, Urtsun & Birir serving in Chitral Scouts were sent on leave to gather the information from the villages..

The first lead came from Noor Muhammad a local who disclosed that he had provided mules for some Afghans

*‘ I was going from my village Otak Banda to grazing ground at Waler Banda with my mules when I encountered a dozen Afghans along with a person wearing a chaddar moving under their protection they were climbing up, the man with chaddar was walking with a stick other were carrying weapons, one an told me rather ordered that he is their officer pointing towards the man wearing chaddar and I should take him upon on my mule ,I refused and was taken along on gun point...after some time my animal also got tired and I was ordered to carry the officer on body which I did..later I really had to touch their feet to let me go which they did. It was Ramadan and they were eating and offered me the same but I declined. I had talk with them and asked about the person , they narrated that they have abducted it from Bhumbirit and in the process had killed one policeman also, they had wrapped the bombs around their body and i think even the bag which they were carrying was full of bombs’.*

One cannot ascertain the truth of this but it was certain that they adopted the Parapit Pass route to reach Patti Gol. Commandant Colonel Rizwan Rafi { former special services group} visited the area and held the jirga and was of the opinion that local residents of Bhumbirit & Shekhandeh are involved{it proved correct later}. The parties of local were sent to Nuristan on 10<sup>th</sup> September comprising of local jirga members for release of Athanasius , one left on vehicle via Arandu-Birkot route the other two on foot via Zingoor Pass.

**On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2010**, the jirga came back with letters from Athanasius, which was delivered to the Chitral Scouts in which Athanasius wrote ‘ I am fine here until today..Taliban demands 20,000 US\$ and freedom of their prisoners’. Two of the messengers sent to the local Taliban leader had an unfortunate accident as one was killed when NATO aircraft bombed the area and other was seriously injured.

Mr Athanasius was later released by the Taliban after Greek Embassy agreed to pay the ransom. Prisoners were not released, he was handed over to Chitral Scouts.

**Zhangshall Abduction.** On 28<sup>th</sup> November 2010, eight men were abducted by the Afghans while they were cutting woods , they abducted eight woodcutters and left one with the

message that Zhangshall belongs to them and no wood cutting is allowed . Later all the wood cutters were released who narrated that they were taken into Gawardesh in Afghanistan where the **abductees** simply got tired of feeding them and thus left them one by one. The woodcutters were hired by the locals for wood cutting and had come to the area on vehicles. Lower Chitral is famous for the wood thus a 'wood mafia' has emerged. This small incident highlights the intriguing face of the conflict. Everything which happens does not necessarily have roots to extremism.

### **Ursun Post - 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011.**

On the night of 1May 2011 the miscreants belonging to the Swat chapter attacked the post which was held by 30 Scouts of Chitral at 0200 hours , miscreants were in strength of 20-30 who had infiltrated through the Paith Zom Pass and Gambir Gri Pass to cross the frontier and then used Banjal to reach the post. The initial plan of the miscreants was to attack silently but they were discovered by the alert sentry and that resulted in exchange of heavy fire. Five rockets fired by them landed inside the post, this fire duel continued for another three hours before the miscreants were forced to flee. The miscreants while fleeing attacked one post of border police and took away eight SMGs along with three policemen of border police as hostage. Miscreants were believed to be part of Faizullah Group<sup>17</sup>.

### **Darashot- The Longest Day.**

On 27<sup>th</sup> August 2011, the Afghan miscreants attack seven different posts of Chitral Scouts in Arandu – Mirkani area spread over 32 Kilometres, the crow distance between them is 22 kilometres; soon after Fajr prayers. It was the first such attack of this magnitude since 1919 and when seen in present context of war against militancy this was the dragging of Chitral into the Durand Line affairs from which it has been able to keep a safe distance since 1895.

The attack lasted till noon, post which came under the attack were Ursoon, Mirkani, Dommel Nisar & Langurbat with heavy fire, mortars, rocket propelled grenade launchers , all which is usual in the tribal attacks on the posts all along the front and physical attack was launched upon the Gudigar, Darashot and Kauti. It is the pattern of the Taliban in which the attack is launched on a group of posts , keeping some under the fire and attacking one particular physically. It creates delaying action upon the defender especially at night in mountainous terrain with very poor communication tracks .Chitral Scouts stood out the test and fought bravely holding the posts intact especially at Darashot.

People living in the area especially at Nuristan, Shekhandeh, Bhumbirit Rumbur, Ursoon, Ginjirate Kuh, Arandu, Chitral are relatives to each other since centuries and it they have been

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<sup>17</sup> District Coordinating Officer Chitral, Letter No.4225 dated 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010.

travelling almost daily to meet each other and carry out the chores of centuries old rituals of trade through frequented and unfrequented routes<sup>18</sup>. The district administration had established the contacts with the people living in Nuristan for maintaining peace in the area and not allowing the Taliban or hard core Islamic militants in the area; so far it had worked for almost eleven years a remarkable achievement when seen in the context of overall devastation of social fibre in the frontier and other regions of Pakistan.

Miscreants had the concentration area at Gawardesh from where they crossed into the Chitral boundaries through Pathkun Bro, Paitazom, Kauti Gol, Gambiri Gri and Chulu Gol. They were a mixture of Afghani and Nuristani men wearing stolen NATO uniform and definitely supported by the Afghan National Army personnel as one of the dead body later revealed. It is highlighted that in May same year five posts of Afghans were wiped out by the miscreants which Afghan alleged to be based in Pakistan. The warning about the impending attacks was received almost a month ago with rumours coming from the lips of the travellers and the centuries old natives' way of information. What was surprising, was the magnitude as almost seven posts were hit simultaneously. The quick reaction forces were made ready at nodal points and wings were warned to keep a high alert and this in the end saved the day. The four worst hit posts were Darashot, Gudibar, Kauti & Langurbat.

At Darashot thirteen individuals of the post including post commander embraced shahadat, yet they did not surrendered it, Sepoy Nasir manned the machine gun till 1300 hours when the relief force came on the post. Attack was led by the Ghazwan and Zubair both local miscreant commanders with Zubair getting injured also.; all in all 32 Taliban were killed, the remaining while fleeing burnt the hanging bridge on River Chitral thus practically bringing the chase to an end. They had looted the weapons as well which they took it back via Langurbat, Arandu, Khur and Dab.

### **Sepoy Nasir Min Ullah- Last Man Standing**

On 27<sup>th</sup> August which was 27 of Ramadan also, Sepoy Nasir after taking his sehay along with six other scouts was reciting the Holy Koran. No joy can match than reciting the greatness, favour, love of our creator, sitting at a small plateau overlooking the calm, green valley with River Chitral flowing with all the glaciated water, It was dawn with cool air blowing lightly and gently; Ramadan was coming to an end in another two days thus festivity of Eid was already in air and in hearts of scouts. Many scouts had gone on Eid leave yesterday thus bringing the manning level at certain posts to unauthorised level.

Darashot is a small hamlet on the western bank of River Chitral, a small wooden hanging bridge allows the fifty odd inhabitants to cross over. On the other hand it allows the tribes, men,

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<sup>18</sup> DCO Chitral, Letter No.2818/DCO/dated 6<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

scouts to cross over and get into Afghanistan , area is thickly vegetated with olive trees, boulders, stones, defiles with odd patches of level field. Darashot was a post a small post and not a small piquet , it was a check point established at the eastern end of bridge, it was nothing more than a room with two tents pitched alongside having ammunition, living , cooking, for twenty scouts in them, commanded by Subedar Niat Ghazi . The main aim was to keep the wooden hanging bridges under observation, checking everyone physically who crosses it and at dusk to close it. A procedure being followed since 1901 in the area when ever there was any threat from Afghans. Historically River Chitral bifurcates the Hindu raj like a peach line. Area on west was Kafiristan , extending from Arandu all along the west bank , reaching a conical omega bend at Nagur & Mirkhani, and encompassing Ayun, very few crossing points not more than a dozen are available .

Darashot was a complex of two posts, one which was at the bridge and other across the narrow track and higher on the plateau; in a small stone room which was built by the herdsman for self and animals protection. There were six scouts manning this out post, they had no line communication with the post down below. They daily had to go down to fetch the fresh ration or cooked food from the main post. Water was another issue, drinking water was also fetched from down below. Two sentries would give the duty at one time, but it was nothing alarming. There was one machine gun, one rocket launcher with six rounds, and four rifles at the post, it was a section strength weapons and ammunition.

*‘ I heard a shot and I inquired from my comrade who was standing and looking at the vast, dimly lit frontier with weapon in his hand, I got up and walked towards him , that is when the first major burst of fire opened up, it included machine gun, with rocket launcher noise overpowering all other; they had hit the ammunition tent and now the crackling of rifle fire. It all took two minutes, now all of my comrades were out , running with the weapons and occupying the positions. None of us was sure as to what had actually happened and where should we fire in retaliation’.*<sup>19</sup>

Machine gun could not fire down below because of ‘line of fire’ which created a dead zone. In another few minutes situation became clear, our post down below was hit with rockets and small arms fire, enemy had established fire base on the western bank and now they were running across the bridge. Sepoy Nasir narrates

*‘ I fired a rocket at the bridge to destroy it thus blocking the invasion but I missed it by few feet. Within seconds they were on our bank, now fire started coming on our locality too. There was no pause everything was happening in quick time’*

Apparently miscreants initially had very little or no information about the post at higher ground, it had affected their pla.; they now ascended up and engaged the post. By 0710 hours two scouts had embraced shahadat at the Darashot Post No.2 and almost all were wiped out at

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Naik Nasir in September 2013 at Mirkani.



the main post down below. By 0745 hours the battle was going on at the higher post, miscreants apparently had achieved their aim but now wanted to wipe out the complex completely. One reason was that they had suffered casualties due to the fire coming from Nasir's post.

*' In another hour I was the only one left alone at the post, around me were the dead bodies lying of my five comrades, I lost all sense of proportion, I became full of rage, I knew sooner or later a bullet is going to end my life like they taken away the lives of these five scouts. I was firing from different positions with different weapons which were lying around. I gradually started taking the dead bodies inside the room, I did not want them to be beheaded. '*

Sepoy Nasir took the position inside the hut and relied the fire, soon two rockets acme and hit his bunker, room was full of smoke and nothing was visible, two Taliban came rushing in following the rocket burst, Nasir saw just a silhouette and fired back, it hit the Taliban in head and he died instantly. Now the battle took another dimension, Taliban were now eager and desperate to get the dead body back and Nasir was holding the post single handed. Duel continued for another hour, and then Taliban offered him safe passage if he allows them to take the dead body, Nasir fired a burst in reply. Taliban made another attempt to enter, destroy the hut but failed, by mid day Nasir was left with only seven bullets of rifle. At this point Taliban vacated the post and the area as rescue was approaching from Mirkhani. Nasir was ignorant about all this and when he heard the voices of men asking him to come out he refused and it was only when his own wing mate came and he recognised their voice did he came out.

Sepoy Nasir was promoted and then sent on United Nations Peace Corps in Sierra Leone. He have one more brother who is also serving in Chitral Scouts.

**Orakzai Agency.** A company strength ex Chitral Scouts was sent to Orakzai Agency in May 2010 for " Operation Khawa Bade Sham". The company performed exceptionally well and repulsed a number of attacks of the miscreants inflicting heavy casualties to them while defending 'Top' in Daburi. On night 21/22 June 2010, the company repulsed the major miscreants attack causing them 43 dead and 56 injured. Own losses were four shaheed (including two from Punjab Regiment) and sixteen injured.

### **KHYBER RIFLES; Again, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

I came yesterday to Khyber Rifles in a hurry, nothing serious. I had a good interaction of over an hour with IGFC , he was composed as usual and bursted his heart out about the Jamat Islami's statement about the status of martyrdom regarding army and uniform jawans. It has been a horrific, idiotic, insulting , derogatory, thoughts expressed by an sick amn of evil reputé the monkey looking Maulana Munawwar Hassan the head of Jamat Islami political party in an interview or so called atlk show on television. Few days back the even more nefarious Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman alis Moulvi diesel has declared that even if a dog dies in an American Drone attack then he is a martyr. All this fuss is because the Hakim Ul mehsud the leader of the Taliban have been killed in a Drone attack last week. It was a sigh of relief, a

nationalistic pride restored, revenge of Major General Sanaullah has been taken, score settled. This has left a big paradigm in the overall situation. Moulvi Fazlullah of Swat is the now new commanders of Taliban, he belongs to Swat. Chances are that the war will now end soon because the leadership has gone out of the hands of the Wazirs and more specifically from Mehsuds. The history bears that whenever the insurgency has risen from the areas outside Waziristan then it has been eliminated quickly. 1992 insurgency and its suppression is the most logical evidence, it started in Swat by the afther in law or relatives of current Fazlullah and it spread soon in Malakand, Swat, Dir, Kohistan and adjoining areas but was soon overcome by Major General Naseer Ullah Babar and IGFC Major General Ghazi ud din Rana, Babar was the interior minister then.

Both these maulvis have shed away the veil of nationalism which they have been wearing deceptively since 1947, they do not believe in Pakistan, it is as simple as that. Pakistan represents a state in every sense both ideologically, religiously, as per international definition of state. Thus it is the state which decides about war, about use of violence and this is how state works. Within Pakistan or within any state there are always crisis. Killing any man on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1947 just because he is Hindu, Sikh cannot be overlooked by the local police inspector because this is how he is trained and this is how state organs work. By 1950 Pakistan was fully functional and organized country. In 1953 the movement for the declaration of Qadianis as non Muslims started and it resulted in a martial law. It were the moulvi who wanted to stamp their version of a Muslim, it was headed by Madoodi the founder of Jamat Islami. Jamat and Madoodi never accepted Pakistan, they were against the very creation of Pakistan. It is irony of fate that the very people and parties who were not in favour of the Pakistan and called Mr Jinnah the founder of Pakistan as Kafir Azam later became the champion of Islam. It was in 1977 that the religious parties gathered under the banner of Pakistan National Alliance {PNA} and I have very little doubt that it was backed by the army which was headed by General Zia; himself a fundamentalist and this is how the political parties emerged as the winner. Later Jamaat was called as 'My B team' by General Zia. By 2000 the country was under the grip of Islamic fundamentalist, debate with liberals and moderators was undergoing as to what is wrong with religious parties being in power, in last ten years the hold of Islamic parties have gone stronger with every day yet they had never won any election in Pakistan, they came close to winning it in 2003 but had to settle for only Frontier Province. In 1970 they also had the power in same province, they lost it to Tehreek Insaaf in 2013 elections. Now Jamaat and Imran Khan who is a graduate of Oxford University and in 1970s and 80s the role model of my generation, the most loved male of our time, he later constructed a hospital with public charity in memory of his mother. He joined rather made an entry into politics in 1994-5, never won any seat except one in 2002 elections, boycotted the 2007 elections and won a handsome votes in 2013 which put his party in power in Frontier province. Before his marriage with Jemima Goldsmith almost half his age in 1995 he had a colourful life in which he fathered a girl from an American lady but Khan later denied being his father, it was only when the lady went to a court not for money but to give her daughter a name in society that Khan accepted being the father. A man who is more known for his foul language, vague statements and pessimistic approach in almost everything in life; Jamaat is his political ally in the frontier province and as such Khan has not bothered to give any statement denouncing what all has been uttered by the Jamaat in the talk show. Army very rightly asked for an apology from Jamaat and it was expected that Jamaat will realize the nonsense uttered by their chairman {amir} but the Jamaat came out even more lethal in response thus the whole country is now in a state of agitation over this.

I left baalhisa at 1600 hours on Tuesday with an escort of two scouts and one driver. I wanted to avoid travelling on the Khyber after sunset but now I had no option, violation of SOP is the biggest cause of all major accidents in Frontier Corps and here I myself was in the act of doing the same. Got my things from the room, thanks, I just had got the new Bannu militia wollen shalwar kameez stitched only yesterday thus I was comfortable and confident. It is true that these proper clothes are the biggest source of self confidence at any pace in world but more specifically in frontier.

It took an hour and half just to reach the Hayatabad from the Frontier corps Mess at Kohat Road. Traffic haphazard, no sense, no markings on road, vehicles of all kind plying and trying to get through the small venturis. A by pass road has been constructed which allows the heavy traffic to by pass the city but for people living inside the city there is little respite. Peshawar practically have no underpass and even the lone flyover is too narrow at the turns and other is waiting completion since last year. Compare to Lahore, Peshawar looks medieval and backward even comparing to Rawalpindi. Driver was eager to drive fast but I checked him all the time. After crossing Hayatabad we passed through the old Bara where few shops were still open selling opium and hashish, the signboards and advertising of these small stalls is quite interesting, they highlight the quality of stuff and the effects.

The mounting skyline was visible although sun was almost about to set down, traffic was fluent, heavy trucks going to Kabul passed by, the incoming Pakistan-Afghanistan Dosti Bus service bus crossed us near Hayatabad. Road from Hayatabad till Jamrud is excellent and we were at Jamrud in no time. Jamrud Fort was on our right, bazaar and few stalls on our left. From Jamrud one road leads to Shilman area by passing the Afridis, I saw the road. From Jamrud onwards the darkness set in and road became a track. Driver had last driven here almost three years ago, other two companions or escorts included a havildar {Mohmand} and other was Bangash. Discussion started about the book, the culture, the tribal values and so on. My eyes were on the road and meanwhile I motivated these two to fight in case if we are abducted or ambushed. There is practically no reaction time in case one is ambushed here at Khyber at night on such broken tracks, we followed the lights of the leading vehicles. One now understands in earnest the values of tribal pacts with governments, there was very little chance of anything sinister happening to us because we were moving under the tribal protection {Kuki Khel}. Soon after entering the pass we reached Ali Masjid gorge. In Chitral I was lucky to find an old military magazine of 1930 in which the episode of Ali Masjid in 1839 was given in detail by the eye witnesses account.

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### **Massacre at Ali Masjid ‘ Sally Musgrave’.**

On 1<sup>st</sup> November 1839 the Ali Masjid fort which was under the Sikh occupation with one native infantry and one Nazib Battalion{ Muslims employed by Sikh}, the Nazib battalion was at the summit when it was attacked, it ran short of ammunition and while retreating it was attacked by Khyberis ‘swooped down like lightning upon them and either killed or dispersed the whole battalion which consisted of eight hundred men..two hundred and sixty have been buried and about two hundred made their way to Peshawar; of the remainder nothing is unknown’. Captain Lowe visited the site which was half a mile away from his camp ; stench from the partially buried bodies was so great that it was barely

possible to remain there. The back ground of this massacre reflects upon the history and causes of violence in the pass. Colonel Wade the British official at Lahore had promised the Khyberis while he was passing through in 1839 for the payment of allowances and tributes, when he was travelling back from Kabul to Peshawar he was reminded again by the Khyberis of his past commitment, colonel wade again made a promise but it was never fulfilled and resultantly the massacre took place. ‘The chiefs honourably fulfilled their promise, several small parties of officers passed through the Khyber and not one was molested or interfered with, to use the term of the chiefs, women and children might carry gold through the pass’.<sup>20</sup>

Words and commitment have certain honour in the pass, the Afridi on their part always stood by the words given as is obvious from their conduct since this massacre as long as the other party sticks to their words.

I banked upon these words and history for my own safety. We momentarily halted at Ali Masjid to have a better look at the gorge. My mind was thinking about what happened here in 1839. We then raced through the pass, quite often we lost track, there are two tracks which run parallel now, one meant for heavy traffic and other for light vehicles, there is no way you can make out which track leads to where but we just followed the light vehicles and all of a sudden found ourselves at the Landi Kotal. The discussion was mainly around the statements of both maulanas and scouts were furious about them. There is no doubt that such statements are harmful for military morale and in coming days it will have repercussions.

Reaching Khyber Mess was like coming back to a relative’s home, the mess havildar was the same, waiters were same and it was so refreshing to see them and embrace them, i was allotted the same room the Michni, top floor at the end. Mess was undergoing renovations when i left especially the top floor, stairs and billiard room, now they all have been completed and it was giving a good look. Officers were sitting in the ante room watching the fifth and final one day match between Pakistan and South Africa, Pakistan already had lost the series and they lost this match as well without putting up any fight. I was invited by commandant for a dinner at his house at 2000 hours. I was there in time. I forgot to highlight that I was wearing the tie and black blazer since morning when i met IGFC and travelled on Khyber pass in same dress, I might have changed into shalwar kameez at Peshawar but i was running short on time. This dress was my main anxiety while travelling at night on Khyber pass. Commandant as usual was warm in welcome, we talked about trivial things, I conveyed him the regards of Madam Carey Schoffield which he reciprocated. Food was ok, commandant narrated how he had lost his puppy last week, about his hunting trip to Mohmand where he bag almost a dozen birds in an hour {near Salala Post}. I updated him about Chitral and Chitral Scouts. Night was cold, starlit with moon in second phase thus bit of light, all in all very peaceful; it was almost midnight. My room was also cold as there is no gas in Landi Kotal and i did not asked for a electrical heater. Khyber rifles is not authorised K-2 oil in winter which all army units are rather they are allowed only firewood for warmth in winter {December – end march}. Budget is allocated for a year in which amount sanctioned caters for ice in summer and firewood in winter, scale is nine kilogram per day per point and cost of wood is rupees 22/ per kilogram. Quite an expensive affair.

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<sup>20</sup> The Journal of the United Service Institute of India. October 1938, Volume LXVIII, No.293, *A Visit to Peshawar 100 years ago, Diary of Captain Lowe*. pp, 476-482.

In the morning i wore the same attire{sign of confidence} and met adjutant Major Naeem Saleem, Lieutenant Colonel Ijaz, Major Habib the DQ, subedar major Azim afridi and host of other scouts. I made a point to go to Mahsud dance party barrack to say hello. It was at this point taht i thought about Hakimullah Mahsud. As a fellow tribesman these Mahsud definitely feel sad over his death. There is no doubt that he was a worthy opponent to the state and has added glory to his tribes folklore. Mahsud's were welcoming in nature and soon almost everyone came to meet. I had a cup of tea with them , talk about Chitral, inquired about their welfare and family. Majority of them look different in uniform with so long hair, their pronunciation of words in Urdu is also different but overall a good feeling to be among them. Naik Maroof Mahsud then walked with me towards the barracks of Chitral dance party which i intend visiting. But before that I went to the training area which is next to the barracks. Recruits wee being fall in the ground with one instructor carrying out drill lesson, two were sitting on a chair at the far end and one instructor was taking the Urdu classes of recruits. Drill lesson was good, recruits were made to run around and carried out front rolls. Instructors are impressive, very courteous and carrying a military bearing all the time. Then we went to the Chitral dance party living. Chitralis are not as hospitable as the Pathan tribes are but they did not let me go without having a cold drink and the dry fruit. I narrated them about my travel in Chitral , the food i took there, the areas i visited, forts and names of scouts and it was very cordial and one could feel the bond being strengthened among us. Mahsud {Maroof} sat quietly and uttered nothing in these ten odd minutes of our stay. Later i bid good bye to Maroof and came back to adjutant office.

Gul Hassan Kuki Khel the photographer was the man i was looking but he was in Peshawar and reached back around mid day. I met Lieutenant Colonel Ijaz in his office and at that precise moment a loud bang was heard , it transpired that an IED has been exploded close to Landi Kotal without any fatal loss so the wing commander and the QRF rushed to the spot and i walked back to adjutant office. Major Naeem got busy in ironing out the details of this operation, bomb disposal team was also sent there which diffused another IED. Major Naeem highlighted that he had the intelligence report of such an attack, therefore he had increased the patrolling in the area but still the miscreants have dodged him out.

'Teen seeri' simple means three kilograms and here in Khyber rifles it is used to point out the 3 kilogram mutton karhai. When i was leaving last time at that time the account officer was fined one 'teen seeri' and today it was the turn of the medical officer. The karhai is bought from the 'Adda din ' the most famous of Landi Kotal karhai makers, it cost rupees one thousand per kilogram. It is definitely delicious, tender and enjoyable, tomatoes were lacking as the price of them have gone to rupees 150/ per kilogram. I learnt that on week end no less than 50 such karahis are ordered by troops in andi Kotal apart from the numerous karhis which they cook themselves. A very lively gathering, full of jokes, laughs and so on. I must admit that I did not feel like having a meat dish at any other part of Frontier after my last visit of Khyber rifles; they are too good in making meat especially the lamb dishes. Lieutenant Colonel Ijaz is from 14 Punjab Regiment and as such he his like an infantry officer, smiling, and taking the youngsters along. I enjoyed this lunch which was consumed at 1500 hours. Major Habib is the DQ , he is from 18 Horse and very meticulous, serious and efficient officer, right man for the correct appointment. Before lunch i sat for an hour in his office and observed his working. Issue was the register which are used by the guards and by the staff for 'Sab acha '. It was hilarious and ye speaks volume for Major Habib, he phoned PC at Peshawar to find the most economical registers, he calculated the pages and dived them into days and then worked out the register required; amazing. I also made a call to Lieutenant colonel Mushtaq at Charbagh and requested him for some stuff which he promised to deliver. The wings are in process of

changing their locations , Charbagh wing is moving to Jarobi and Landi Kotal wing is going to Ali Masjid ; thus there will be no wing at Charbagh.

In the mess the key addition is the ‘stone’ which has been placed outside in the lawn , it has natural lines which reads as Allah and Muhammad in vague manner but still it is a good addition as it balance out the overwhelming British era monuments. Had food in my room which comprised of chicken karhai {average} omelettes{good} and a cup of tea.

Commandant came to room and sat for an hour , there is an operation going on in connection with the morning IED blast and adjutant and few other troops have gone out to search the vehicle thus commandant was interrupted time and again by this . My course mate Lieutenant Colonel Rahit Qadeer Butt looks very innocent , he has a baby face, grey hair, married but childless, he lives in Morgah Colony, he was opposite to Major Dogar’s house. I met him twice in last three years, one at course gathering and other when i went to meet Dogar. I also met Qadeer’s wife in that short hello hello. Last month it was reported on face book that his wife has been murdered , it a a shock and i also like other felt sad. Now toady it was reported in the newspapers that infact Qadeer himself was the brain behind the killing of his wife, he had an illicit affair with a former army nurse who happens to be Christian as well. Qadeer and nurse planned the murder, Qadeer went out of city for an alibi and nurse came in a red car and smashed the head of the lady and then drove away. Qadeer in his police report pointed the finger at his brother in law. The whole drama was unearthed by the local police which worked in a smart manner without coming under any army pressure, the CCTV footage and record of mobile calls both helped in reaching the culprits. Commandant Colonel Mansoor was also in picture about this but not the today’s development thus when I narrated him the events he was perturbed. He knew Qadeer and had a common friend who later asked him{commandant} to interfere on behalf of Qadeer; now commandant called the same friend and narrated him the full story; commandant was genuinely happy to come out so clean of this mess.

### **13<sup>th</sup> November 2013.**

Day was normal, I was supposed to go to Ali Masjid for a night stay thus I was eager to finish off the reaming work concerning the book. Went around the fort with Gul Hussain Kuki Khel and found some interesting things. In the map section, I found sketches made by recruits and then the education staff handed me the essays written by the school boys regarding their villages. Weather is cold in the morning but warm water runs in the bathroom thus bit of mental peace. I still don’t take breakfast in morning just a cup of tea and tea here is average in temperature and taste.

Weather fine, one loves sun now as it stays only till 1700 hours rather the office and mess compound start loosing sun rays quite early; just like army aviation mess and squadron area in Skardu. A junior commissioned officer was promoted today and when I was sitting in the subedar major’s office he walked in with garlands around his neck with followers , he looked as if he has been married an hour ago, such a puzzled look on his face trying to grasp the intensity of the moment.

After observing Frontier Corps life and working pattern , I really appreciates the promotion of soldiers to subedar rank. It demands an unflinching non tiring and a positive body attitude towards his job. He will be put on microscopic examination in every promotion but especially for junior commission,



why I am saying it with so much confidence is in the fact that a promotion conference was already underway and when I was sitting with Major Habib in his office he was dealing with such matters. A havildar had an average report thus he was given the signal to come and explain in person as the reasons but more importantly to be judged by the commandant in interview about his potentials.

Incidentally , i was sitting in the adjutant's office when the military transport JCO walked in and after a pause he introduced himself as the same whom i had put on the promotion ranks at Charbagh two months ago; he also highlighted that he is real brother of the Corps SM Subedar Azim Afridi. All in all they are eight brothers{they seldom talks about number of sisters} and four have or are serving in Frontier Corps.

I spent time in kuki khel's office going through all the pictures.

### **Ali Masjid Forts**

Khyber Rifles Ali Masjid Fort was constructed in 1927, it is on the saddle overlooking Ali Masjid mosque and the small valley on the east .There are two piquets at Ali Masjid the eastern piquet overlook the east and the western piquet has a much smaller view as the pass it self is at its narrowest band, however the important water source and the area on west remains under observation. Both piquets are of identical pattern and size which is rectangular in pattern , three storied solid piece of stone, mud, iron and wood complex. In 1942 the wall was erected on the southern edge of the saddle thus making the complex asa fort, on the northern edge is the road and stream almost 1500 feet below. Area is rough, mountainous, with green shrubs which are of no use other than giving a green colour , shade and camouflage, no fruit trees. Stones, rocks are of solid in nature, the most obvious is the 'Chaqmaq' which when strikes together produces spark. Originally there was no motor able track leading to the fort from Ali Masjid ; it was an equitation oriented piquet complex. It was important in every sense because it was overhead the place where most gruesome massacre of Sikh battalions took place twice between 1837-1839 , in the past similar history is orally traded. Importance is in the strategic location of the Ali Masjid ; other tracks which originates from Landi Kotal and follows Chora valley and the track coming from Tirah alley joins here. Thus for the caravans moving towards the west in medieval ages this place was important ; abundance of water at Ali Masjid is another key factor, it still providing water to Shagai and Jamrud forts since 1878. The very first Sikh venture under illustrious Hari Singh Nalwa in April 1837 was mainly a push by the Nalwa to secure water for the Jamrud Fort. Kuki Khel a clan of Afridi lives and control the pass along with water source, although Zakkha Khel also have a bazaar here.

Ali Masjid name and mystique comprises of few segments, the village itself is on the east of the Khyber rifles Fort in the open bowl, the Khyber-Torkham, railway line have its railway

station here too. The mosque which has given the whole valley its present name is at the foothill of the Fort, the history of Ali Masjid is oral in nature which rely upon the presence of Hazarat Ali in the area, most likely the place became popular during Mahmud of Ghazna reign. During the Hindushahi rule of the area {900AD} and even before this date the lone historical evidence is the Buddhist stupa which is on the west of Ali Masjid mosque. A close observation of the adjoining hills highlights the unmistakable remnants of old fortifications , one particular such hillock is located north west of western piquet.

The Ali Masjid fort went a major expansion in 1942 when the underground bunkers were constructed , they are presently used as hospital but they were never meant for this purpose originally. The hospital is a marvel of originality , hard work and engineering. It is practically bomb proof and is the one of its kind on Frontier. It is almost fifty feet deep and inside the mountain, almost twenty odd feet in width and 150 feet in length. There are no outlets for fresh air neither for any kind of light, rooms are small and without any door, more of operation room of an army than that of medical profession.

Another myth of Ali Masjid fort is the southern watch tower which is almost an hour walk from the main complex because of broken ground, it was constructed in the same time period as the underground bunker. The myth started in 1983 when the sentries posted at the watch tower started creating rumors about the 'Jin' and soon it became so established a fact that sentries one night simply ran away from the watchtower complaining of being hit with stones by the Jins. The watch tower was abandoned and even few rounds of mortar were fired on it by the wing itself to dispel the thoughts of it being occupied by extra terrestrial creatures. Presently the fort was not under regular occupation since 2007 because of deployment at other sectors and now No.3 Wing is in process of establishing its headquarters thus the old myths have surfaced again for which both commandant and wing commander have decided to visit the watchtower themselves but it is an interesting myth.

Water shortage had been a major source of all disasters in past, within the fort there is a central water storage having a capacity of over 80,000 gallons and half a dozen more water tanks with lesser quantity hold. Weather is fine in summer but cold in winter which is further aggravated by the strong winds which blows all the time as the fort stands at the junction of various valleys . Electricity load shedding is another factor which makes living in isolation even more obvious, however the solar panels are a new invention and troops are making the best use of it by having small panels for mobile charging.

### **Shagai Fort.**

Shagai Fort was constructed in 1927 at the eastern edge of the village Ali Masjid on a higher plateau overlooking the railway station and the whole valley, it was constructed as an army fort and till to date it has always been under occupation of army regiments. It is a

diamond shape and structure complex, constructed with brick and iron, having over fifty feet high walls with five watch towers which can operate independently also, water storage is outside the walls of fort but within fire shot of sentries. The western lands adjacent to fort is utilised as the firing range and sports ground. There is a swimming pool and squash court apart from tennis court inside the fort. Fort have two storied construction, all in all 104 rooms are available for living accommodation with each room sufficient enough for platoon strength of force. The fort construction primarily follows the Drosh fort construction design in which firing bays are incorporated within the living quarters. The other unique feature of construction is the circular roof, a sentry can walk all around the fort roof. Shagai Fort and Ali Masjid Forts are in line of sight to each other with two more piquets along the axis, Shagai also have two more watchtowers, one in the north and other in the east. Presently it is the rear headquarters of Schwebo Battalion.

Shagai importance lies in the fact that it controls the Tirah valley route also and act as reserve to any event which spills out of Khyber Rifles control.

### **Jamrud Fort.**

Jamrud Fort is the oldest fort in the Khyber Rifles area of operations, Khyber Pass starts or terminates at Jamrud depending upon whether on eis moving eastward or westward. There are two forts at Jamrud, one the old and original fort is presently located on the north side of the road Peshawar-Kabul and the smaller fort is on the southern side of the road. The original fort is under the army use and the Khyber Rifles wing occupies the rather new fortified complex which in reality cannot be termed as a fort.

Hari Singh Nalwa completed the construction of forts that included Jamrud, Peshawar and Shab Qadar. Jamrud was under command of Maha Singh with a strength of 600 Sikh and Muslims troops, where as Shab Qadar was placed under command of Lehna Singh Sandhawala with 1900 troops.<sup>21</sup> Layout and construction of Jamrud Fort is almost a replica of Bala Hisar of Peshawar only it is small in circumference. Constructed with mud bricks which still are in use with supplement of stone bricks. Undoubtedly the fort stands today in almost the same fashion as it was in 1837, the grand wooden gate is still in use so is the water well which is 400 feet deep. Jamrud thus stands as the last frontier fort of the Sikhs protecting Peshawar and also the Lahore Darbar from the invasion route of millenniums; Khyber Pass.

Jamrud Fort was popularly known as ‘Hari Nalwa Fort’ after the Sikh general who not only completed it but also took his last breadths here on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1837. The very room in which Nalwa spent last days of his life is the top of the fort and after his death the news was hidden from the soldiers due to morale factor and for three days the dead body of Nalwa used to be

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<sup>21</sup> Khushwant Singh, *Ranjit Singh Maharaja of the Punjab* {Penguin, 1962, Delhi}, p189.

propped on the window to keep the troops morale high and intact. In 1892 a Samadhi was constructed in the memory of Nalwa.

Jamrud Fort or Nalwa Fort provides excellent all round observation as far as eye can see, it was important because it kept a check on the Afghans attempt to recapture Peshawar, presently it is still vital for the maintenance of peace and order in the area. Fort now encompasses almost whole area and land in the north uptill the Jamrud railway station, a wall has been erected around the complex which was completed in 2009. Firing range, sports ground and troops married accommodation which in the past were outside the main fort are now within the walled complex. One infantry battalion remains in occupation of the fort and it helps also in its maintenance and uplift. Fort has five cordons each separated by a gate and area becomes narrow and narrow as it moves inward and upward ; ultimately at the top which is almost 300 feet higher than the ground level there are only a compound of five rooms at the top which in the past was the residence of the fort commander.

### **Khyber Rifles Jamrud Fort.**

The other fort , smaller in size was constructed in 1944 opposite the main Nalwa Fort, it is flat in nature with open compound having double storied accommodation three sides with office on the remaining end. With the passage of time it kept on expanding and now houses the political administration offices in the adjacent land, it used to be the wing headquarters as well but now one company is stationed. As recently as on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013, the Khyber Rifles successfully conducted an operation against the group of kidnappers hiding in the Jamrud area from this fort; it was a successful. operation.

## **Kurram Valley- February 2014**

**Thursday 20th February 2014.** Thall Scouts Officers Mess.

It is almost midnight, sitting in the Sazo guest room of the Thall scouts, the room is named after a post, it is a small room the smallest I have stayed in the Frontier Corps in last two years, light is dim probably working on generator but a small electric heater is working and giving its red glow, weather is fine not much cold, although it drizzled in the evening. I came almost three hours ago and it seems a long story but it is important to give a back ground of the past months. I myself is amazed that only a full moon ago I was in Virginia, America for a month and spent the new year there with my friend Reena and now sitting here in Frontier but honestly even while there my heart was in frontier because the thrill and excitement it generates cannot be matched by the peace and tranquillity of America.

There is a peace talk going on with Taliban while it was in embryo stage it has been sabotaged by the killing of 23 frontier Corps troops by the Bajaur chapter of Taliban headed by a Khurassani and it has

not only sadden every Pakistani but also created a wave of anger. Two important events have taken place in frontier, first is the coming to power of pro-Taliban government of Tehreek Insaaf led by former test cricketer Imran Khan and second is the killing of the Taliban leader Hakimullah Mahsud few weeks ago in a Drone attack. Equally important is the assumption of army command by general Raheel Sharif in a peaceful transition of command from general Kayani who was expected to bring something out of blue to prolong his stay in the office. Another sad but important event has been the disastrous Sunday two months ago when an explosive laden car blew itself at Bannu garrison while the convoy was getting ready to move towards the Miranshah. This was very unfortunate as I have stayed and travelled in the same convoys and twice travelled in civilian hired vehicles. It has been a common practice to hire a civilian vehicle for transportation and none ever paid any heed to the fact that it can be blown up but these Taliban have always been a step ahead in creating ripples and so far military is simply following or adopting reactive measures and who knows what next is in store, may be poison in the food or water which is also bought from open market or a civilian worker or taxi driver blowing himself in the mess vicinity, there are too many loop holes you cannot sit behind a fort and be cutoff from the daily chores these things are bound to happen and it is only in strong retaliation against Taliban which restores morale.

### **Kurram Valley.**

I first came or travelled in Kurram valley in 1985 when Russians were still in Afghanistan and my regiment had one battery deployed ahead of Parachinar in an ack ack role. Major Ibrar was the battery commander and Captain Sami Khan was the permanent officer here because he was Pathan and only one who spoke Pashtu thus he stayed here for maximum period. I was a lieutenant then and I took a public transport from Sargodha and reached Kohat and from there I once came in the Hiace having a front seat and wearing jeans and jacket. The most vivid memory of that journey is the long road which connects Thall with Kohat, it had trees on both sides which were providing the shades or had the entire road wrapped under their shadows, similar scene was re-enacted short of Sadda where the wagon had a stop for I think half an hour. I was mentally scared but the environments were very favourable, majority of population was Afghan refugees and as such they had good views about army. Our camp was ahead of Parachinar in an area known as Lady Roberts garden, I was perplexed on the name but years later I came to know that it is named after the wife of General Roberts who commanded British army in India in 1883, incidentally it was today that I read again the Three Campaigns in Afghanistan written by General Robert's son who himself as a lieutenant took part in the Second Afghan War of 1878, a classic in every sense, the style and content is simple but very appealing.

During my stay at Parachinar, I was fascinated with the area and the beauty apart from an inherent enjoyment of war which every subaltern enjoys and looks forward, I would dream of shooting down a Russian aircraft because all I had to do was to press the electric button and all eight guns would have fired simultaneously, it was wishful thinking because these 57mm Chinese guns rarely fired in synchronisation even on ranges. I think I had an opportunity once when two Russian gunships appeared on the horizon overhead Teri Mangal and fired few flares and then couple of rockets over the city, our range meter indicated that these are out of our 6000 meters range thus I took few photographs and that was it. Russian jets usually would cross the salient there by violating our airspace for few seconds and for this precise issue our battery was deployed. War was fun then, no tension main issue was the mines which reportedly Russians had thrown in the area or planted by their agents on the road and track thus our almost daily sojourn to and from Parachinar Mess was an ordeal with nerves all the time expecting a blast

but I think only few occurred but it was just like having a fear of snake, 17 Punjab was in the Parachinar. Captain Sami and myself once drove towards Teri Managal and climbed to Peiwar Kotal on the army jeep and that scene is also engraved in my memory, as we were driving up we halted at a wood cutter hut, he had two Kalashnikovs hanging on a tree and was busy in his work; he was mentally and physically ready to confront the Russians in case they attack him. Lemon grass was another popular item, it is a herb and an excellent tea is made with it full of lemon aroma. Another hot item was the Russian air conditioner which were making their debut, they were costing Rupees 2000 and yet people were bit reluctant in buying them but slowly and gradually they were gaining a good reputation. I bought one shot gun from Sadda a Russian make which had engravings of rabbit on one side and dog on other side, it was priced at 1800 rupees. Why I am narrating all this is because this is what the mood was then, war was taken as a leisure and nothing serious about it. I came to know that sectarian rift is very high in Parachinar and few times when I went to bazaar, I was shown the Shia imam bargah and the sunni mosque both in close proximity to each other but again nothing very serious about it. I also once travelled on the narrow gauge train which used to run between the Thall and Kohat. Today I just saw its remnants. When our battery was ordered to move back, we had an incident, one of the soldier simply lost his rifle G-3 at night. He was sitting on top of the truck which was heavily overloaded, it seems unfortunate that military move was not taken seriously, our luggage had increased much when we came because now we had the extra wood with us which we had used to make the living bunkers and we intend taking it along, anyway we came to know about it at Kohat. It will not be out of context if I admit that I drove Unimog all the way at night from Parachinar to Kohat and I had very little driving experience then, my driver just sat with me and I think he was praying all the time for safety but military culture was such that he could not refuse.

I was the only one who was least pushed about the loss of rifle because I was too naïve and young to understand the gravity of the event but my battery commander and commanding officer knew it thus a plan was formulated in which a new rifle was purchased from Darra Adam Khel an Iranian G-3 and I was task to carry out the last act of it; to destroy the newly purchased rifle at Sargodha by placing it under the rail tracks and then to announce that the rifle has fallen down from the soldier as train was being shunted. In reality the rail could not destroy or run over the bolt group and just dragged it. This was most unexpected and we had to resort to the hammering to distort the numbers on it. The background to all this was that in 1979 regiment had lost one rifle while sentry was on duty at Sargodha and legend goes that the then commanding officer Hanif Soomar a career officer developed a heart disease due to the interrogation of special investigation Board. This remained our well-kept secret for over two decades but as all official papers are made public after twenty five years thus I think it is ok to narrate the incident.

## **22<sup>nd</sup> February 2014-0530 hours.**

Fajr prayers call is in air and this is what one misses in western civilisation, the official way to start the day, unfortunately it has been years since I have offered my fajr prayers but the call is sweet and one feels like getting up and walking to the mosque to offer the prayers but I know despite all this conviction I will still not go to the mosque; one day I will.

Yesterday which was Friday, I had gone early to the offices of the Thall Scouts and by early I mean 0945 hours, today I was not stopped by the sentry at quarter guard as he did last night {Thursday} office block is rather a new building, all around the paint work was under progress on the adjoining structures. Met Major Kalim the adjutant he is from 13 lancers and as such quite hospitable and

accommodative. Commandant Colonel Salman had gone to the brigade headquarters for some briefing, I had tea and more tea, weather cloudy with light drizzling and chilly but still pleasant or at least this was my perception while sitting in adjutant office. An hour later, adjutant got the call from his commandant to get the troops ready for some action. One major of SOG came and adjutant briefed him, the body language of the major was not very comfortable and he raised few issues which adjutant had no answer like, how much is going to be the duration of the likely operation? Should I take luggage and bedding? And so on, he left the office without shaking hands, not a good sign. Few more officers came but overall it was relatively calm. I in my experience with FC now knows that nothing will move without the consent of commandant but in meanwhile I slowly prodded the adjutant regarding the availability of data on history and was pleased to know that some work has been done and new commandant is also interested in compilation of history. Tae again came along with biscuits since I did not have a breakfast thus I finished the plate of biscuits by dipping them in tea. Till 1730 hours I remained seated in adjutant's office waiting for the commandant to come back, by this time the ice was broken and I had few documents to glance around, the superintendent seems to be a good person and he did produce a 1955 Standing Orders which was a revelation even to the adjutant. Much of the data about any corps lies in its standing orders and especially in FC therefore it is of absolute importance to have a copy of it. It was almost torn infested with vermin yet readable, few more drafts of the history all repetitive of each other. One interesting document was a 1962 insurance copy which the Thall scouts had in that period, all history drafts highlighted that Thall Scouts had moved out from the Thall Fort in 1951 and came back in 1954 but this insurance paper was addressed to the commandant Thall scouts at Fort Salop. In reality the Thall Scouts came back in 1964 to Thall Fort and not in 1954 but most likely the figure 54 was misspelled for 64 and as such every subsequent draft simply copied it. Adjutant in my presence went through his file and admitted that he had not seen it in totality thus we actually opened few sealed envelopes few dating back to 1959 and 1960. The general discussion in adjutant office in which I was primarily a listener ranges from cribbing against the system to the ongoing trial of former army chief. One young intelligence officer Captain Imran also came he is also from armoured corps 38 or 39 but from Lieutenant Colonel Ahsan Kayani's unit, he is reluctant to go on a course as he had just got the married quarter but now he had lost all hopes of his course being dropped and as such now mentally ready for move a pleasant personality, another officer which impressed me was a captain of SOG who kept on wearing his battle fatigue mainly because troops area also wearing it.

Commandant came back in his office at 1800 hours, I had a cup of tea with him and same plate of biscuits, he is from 21 Horse and had a good war experience by commanding his regiment at Swat, Bajaur and in North Waziristan, in fact he drove the tanks to Razmak on their own gas, the very first feat of such nature. I saw his regiment war souvenir, a highly decorated regiment, later he served in Saudi Arabia for over three years and now in command. He is mature and looks like a commandant.

I had an early dinner my first meal in the day, mixed vegetables and an omelette followed by a cup of coffee in the mess ante room. The ante room had undergone one major change since I came here last almost a year ago and that is the addition of book shelf. It is very comfortable now to read in the mess and credit goes to present commandant. My room which is small had an electrical malfunction in the morning but it was rectified now, the availability of warm water is a blessing. I went to sleep early and now I am typing the history draft.

Thall Scouts were raised on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1949 at Thall Fort, it was the first scout's corps to be raised after independence and as such enjoys a unique position among the Frontier Corps. There was already a wing strength comprising of Tochi Scouts deployed at Thall Fort which was stationed since March 1948; mainly to protect the line of communication between the Kurram Valley and Tochi Valley, it was boosted with a company strength from South Waziristan Scouts and elevated to the status of a one wing corps mainly to act as reserve to Inspector General Frontier Corps. Major Sanaullah of SWS was the founding father. In 1952, Thall Scouts moved to Fort Salop in Khyber Agency and returned back to Thall in 1964; reason being that in 1952 the army itself again occupied Thall Fort. Thall Scouts took active part in both Indo-Pakistan Wars of 1965 and 1971. It was in 1981 when the Thall Scouts were elevated to three wing composition when newly raised Kohistan Scouts stationed at Spinwam were amalgamated into the Thall Scouts along with raising of one more wing to give necessary manpower; Lieutenant Colonel Sardar Khan was the first commandant. In 1983 a medium battery of Mahsud Scouts was incorporated into the Thall Scouts and fourth wing was added in 1999 with the command structure raised in 1990 to have a colonel in command; Colonel Nusrat Abbas was the first commandant. It was in 2013 that Spinwam Fort and area was handed over back to Tochi Scouts. Thall Scouts is actively participating in the ongoing war against militancy, all in all over 103 Thall Scouts have laid down their lives in the course of duty since inception. Thall scouts have participated apart from the wars in almost all major operations of Frontier corps ranging from Kalat, Bajaur, Zhob, Darra Adam Khel, Darel Valley, Orakzai, Kurram, North & South Waziristan to Force Command Northern Areas.

On raising the strength was 16 platoons comprising of Yousafzai, Khattak, Turi, Orakzai and Afridi tribes, in 1961, two platoons of Orakzai were transferred to newly raised Bajaur scouts thereby reducing the strength to 14 platoons, in July 1969 the strength was reduced to 13 platoons mainly due to amalgamation of one Khattak platoon with headquarter company and raising of pioneer platoon. In 1973, one platoon of Orakzai was transferred to newly raised Mohmand Rifles; presently corps have 44 platoons of nine tribes.

The very first operation Thall Scouts undertook was in May 1959 when the complete force proceeded to Kalat and remained deployed in Khuzdar and Zehri area, aim was to suppress the hostiles and to facilitate the army in operation against the Kalat State. Three officers, 24 junior commissioned officers and 529 other ranks took part in the operation. From Kalat, the contingent moved to Dir & Bajaur states in September 1960 and it was on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1961 that contingent came back to Fort Salop which was the home base then; three officers and 400 troops took part in this operation.

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 1971, almost complete Thall Scouts less one company proceeded to former East Pakistan to restore law and order in the province, troops moved by train to Karachi from where they were transported in ship and reached Dacca on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1971. Their main task was to defend the key installations against the nefarious activities of Mukhti Bhani. They were initially deployed at Rajendurpur ammunition depot, telephone factory at Tungi and weapon factory at Ghazipur. By end May 1971, Thall Scouts were moved out with one company each at Comilla, Sehlat and Chittagong; to establish border posts; in October 1971 the wing was consolidated at Sehlat area where it fought the war collectively. Some pitch battles took place at Maulvi Bazar, Akora Braham Bari, Shamser Nagar, Zake Gank and Atgram, all in all 33 scouts of Thall Scouts embraced shahadat and further eighteen were missing believe Shaheed and 23 were wounded. The events of 1971 War are a sad chapter of our 'military history, the remaining troops of Thall Scouts also surrendered along with the rest of army and were repatriated to



Pakistan in 1973-1974. Thus for all practical purpose the Thall Scouts were non-existent in this period however the unit entity was retained and it remained at Thall Fort with minimum strength of one company.

## **22<sup>nd</sup> February 2014, 2000 hours, Mess lounge.**

Waiting for the dinner, waiter has announced rather informed me about the menu, it is Aaloo-Qeema, the mess does not prepare lunch rather dinner is the only main meal of the day, reason is that the tea breaks are so heavy that there is no need to have lunch and furthermore the working hours are very late due to operational commitments thus hardly any time for lunch.

Yesterday's conference and late sitting has resulted in the early morning arrival of Cobra gunships at around 0700 hours, I was still in my room when the distinct and morale boosting noise of Cobra blades flapping echoed through the valley. Naib Subedar Sher and Naik Rasheed the photographer were at my room at 0830 hours as it was planned yesterday; for a change I was ready beforehand. We first drove towards the Kurram Piquet which is located on the southern edge of the fort approximately two miles away having direct visual contact with the fort, it is on a higher ground, rather it is on the southern saddle of the same ridge on which the fort is constructed. For half an hour we were mesmerised by the gun ships flying low and the unmistakable noise of Cobra's Gatlings firing. The view and scenery was fantastic, lively and almost mesmerising, from the elevation, it was a peaceful scene. I got the bearing from my old compass, the fort almost faces north, with Thall town on north –north west, a high ridge in north which had the scouts firing range but it is no more under use due to prevailing environments, the bridge over River Kurram on the north west which further traverse to the south west towards the Shewa and Spinwam. The tomb on the western side of the bridge stands out due to its dome, down below there is almost half a kilometre of fields which separates the river from the piquet{ river flows almost hundred yards away from the main fort}, these fields were all green, on inquiry it was narrated that this is wheat season. Immediately on the south south west of the piquet is a small mud habitat which is off afghan refugees. In south the area is plain and a confluence of local stream and that of River Kurram, to be more precise the whole fort complex is lying on a ridge between the two streams both joining with the Kurram River.

Piquet itself is not very impressive, it is not like the Mirza piquet of Landi Kotal or for that matter even those of Drosh fort. I have no idea and neither anyone else have any as to what happened to the original structure, it is almost impossible to think that it has been demolished or stolen but then there has to be an answer as to what happened to the actual high citadel; probably it never was in that shape. I vividly remember that I came to Thall in 1993 on a Alouette helicopter with Captain Rizwan, Brigadier Ashfaq Kayani was the brigade commander and we stayed a night here, later in the morning I had gone on a visit to the piquet which was more compact and I was really impressed but then I think it was not this piquet but probably Kohat Piquet was the one which I went inside. Coming back to present, the general knowledge of the subedar about the area was rather sketchy, they did not know the exact names of the surrounding villages and streams. The usual hospitality was there, a small tea break having tea and biscuits along with dry fruit on the roof of the piquet, I just wondered about the piquets in North Waziristan like Amin where it is almost suicidal to sit outside. I inquired about the fire raids on the fort and piquet and it seems that not much has come this way apart from few sporadic rockets which did not cause any damage. There is a frontier constabulary fort on the western side of the river which had borne

the brunt of attack in one incident. The usual layout of the ground is interesting, what differs it from North Waziristan is in terms of greenery and open spaces, in other manner the habitat is similar with high watch towers in almost every village ranging from one to several, to use the term villages is confusing because all in all there are two major population centres across the river stretching south west on a ridge and almost every third house had a watch tower. The Afghan village down the piquet despite having all houses made of mud had one fortified watch tower. Through binoculars, which were rusty and it seems rarely used, I observed the village, it was peaceful with smoke billowing out from few houses indicating food preparation. The eastern side is again similar with few fields spreading out before the stream and then mild ridges and beyond them a vista of mountains and mist. Gunships kept on coming for refuelling and replenishment and created a stir in the overall environment, I saw many men sitting in the fields just observing these birds of prey. These gunships do arise the morale of own troops as it was obvious from the faces of these scouts. After the slaughtering of fellow scouts who were prisoners with Taliban such heli-attacks are more of necessity if the morale has to be checked in going down. An hour later we bid farewell, oh I forgot to mention that photographer soon left us as he was called by the commandant

Dairy farm was our next destination, it is situated on the south west of the fort outside the main building. Quite large in size with a prominent old grand tree, the structure is old as old as the fort itself or may be few years younger. There are over a dozen buffaloes, half a dozen mules and equal number of donkeys on charge, cleanliness was obvious, even the water in the trough for animals was so clean that one could use it as a mirror. I just ask about the Ferrier and came to know that there is none in the corps, how do you then shoe the animal was my next query which took the staff off guard and they had no answer, luckily the vet doctor came in who is nothing more than a compounder but respectfully called doctor by the scouts, every wing have one such veterinary compounder, he confessed that they have not shod the animals because there is no qualified person in the corps. From dairy farm we drove upward through it, following a shingle track, coming into the family quarters of army units onwards to the another old structure, all area outside the fort is under army brigade control, less the fields which are property of Thall Scouts. Peaceful and clean are two words which can describe the environment, if one overlooks the approaching helicopters. Cocktail lounge is the name of this old structure which is like a mini fort by itself having one really old wooden gate, I have no doubt that this gate is original in nature, reluctantly I entered, inside it is quite spacious with two typical bungalows of colonial era, only new thing was the two car sheds. It is under use of the assistant commissioner, it is not easy to retain such old building by the civilian officers' right in the heart of the army brigade, because to army this structure can fulfil many tasks like acting as guest rooms or residence for brigade major. We then drove towards the railway station, it is presently being under the use of Christian community, outside there is a small children park in which few children were playing and watched by their mothers sitting on the walls of the park. These Christian community is certainly at the lowest ladder of the social acceptance yet the magic of life is such that one finds them enjoying the holiday in same fashion as the higher echelons do; children enjoying the sun and mothers talking and enjoying the same heat. There are still notice boards of by gone days like parcel office, the standard railway benches and grill are all intact. As we drove, I notice a small plaque on a stone, on closer inspection I found the brief history of the railway station and that of railway line itself. Kohat was linked with the rest of the country through railway link in 1902 and after two years the Thall was also linked with Kohat with a narrow gauge railways. There was a railway service on alternate days, the journey time was five hours thus it necessitated the parking of railway inside the fort in case of any breakdown. The railway station itself was adjacent to the southern wall of the fort, there were

three main classes of railway carriage, the first, second and third class<sup>22</sup>. This service remained in vogue till 1985 when it was abandoned mainly due to financial reasons, unlike Khyber safari it was never revived.

I had a break in the mess charged my camera and then an hour later at 1145 hours I went out again with Naib Subedar Sher, we now headed towards the JCO Mess, it was locked but soon the man came with the key, it is very neat and clean almost as good as an officers mess, then I went to see the information room which again is very clean, I am really impressed, the most striking thing is the free tea available to the troops in information room, it is on self-service basis, instead of usual chairs, the arrangements are made of cushions and carpet with ash trays and spit bowls, which are necessary for niswar. There is a imambargah also, a mosque, a library under construction or rather expansion. Quarterguard was the next stop, it was constructed in 2000, a sole scout was doing slow march on the road, obviously on punishment, three scouts unarmed were on guard with fourth one carrying a rifle, I have failed to understand this logic. We still regard quarter guard as more of ceremonial rather than as the first one to react to any eventuality. In the mess lawn the number of peacock have risen to almost dangerous number, I counted no less than a dozen of them, white, grey and the standard blue coloured. Ducks, pigeons and few cranes are the other members of this community, not to forget the deer, hen and rooster. All of them were enjoying the sun shine, lying, playing, contemplating and a pair of duck had the guts to made love openly, it lasted for just couple of seconds but I was able to record it on my video camera. In the evening while I was lying in the room, the barber came, god knows who told him to come but he came and I reluctantly had a haircut, he was quite keen to trim my moustaches but I successfully evaded him

It is almost 2200 hours and the adjutant and rest of troops have not yet arrived back from the morning operation.

#### **24<sup>th</sup> February 2014. 1930 hours, Thall Mess.**

Just had a plate of so called Biryani, not much of difference between it or if you simply just mix rice with curry, last two days had been rather hectic, if not for me than for the Thall Scouts. Day before yesterday when they went out for operation, everything went ok, it was only yesterday afternoon when I went to the office area that I came to know that one soldier of Thall Scouts had been killed due to accidental fire while weapon cleaning was in progress, it puts everything else on low gear out of which history compilation is the last thing on anybody's mind other than me. The Scout was 27 years old, he was born in 1987, enrolled in 2008, was married but had no children so far and he belongs to a village in Orakzai. I came to know all this because I was sitting in the adjutant office when all this conversation took place between Major Shafqat and host of people on other end of line, there were three more wounded casualties. A helicopter came, Major Arsalan who was with me in 5 Squadron was the pilot along with Captain Kayani. Arsalan was very courteous and it was his attitude which compelled other to take more notice of me, which included a glass of juice as well. At times I feel very awkward and embarrass to sit in offices area because confidential conversation is going on and I fully understand this culture; it also depends upon the individuals also. Later at night I got the War Diary and digest of service which is of great help in compilation of history. Net is not accessible, there are over a dozen peacock here

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<sup>22</sup> Imperial Gazetteer Provincial series North West Frontier Province, 1905, pp.54-55.

and at evening almost invariably are in sun bathing mood, ducks, pigeons, hen and odd rooster are the other inhabitants of the mess, I was wondering about the very concept of freedom and liberty in relation to these animals and birds and to some extent it holds true for humans also. Tiger is my only link to the outside world, his calls are regular and I am grateful to him for such sincerity and friendship. Reena in America is a way to think modern, I at night wonder about my children and wife too apart from mother.

Well today Major Kaleem was back and it was a sigh of relief to see him , he is polite and courteous, also met Naik Sabz Ali he was on leave, I had met him in Miranshah, he is rather a rebel kind of clerk but very intelligent and have a genuine passion for history. Today in the morning I gave a call to the colonel Mamoon at Bala Hisar but he was out of station, I have to make arrangements for move to Parachinar, thus I contacted Major Jawad in Qila, he was prompt in reply. I think I will be moving out and up north tomorrow, only issue is that I don't have the money to pay the mess bill, lets hope that ATM works here. I do feel sleepy and it is while working that I get this kind of feeling. I found my entry in the visitor book of Thall Scouts , it dates 11<sup>th</sup> July 1992 and we stayed here due to bad weather.

### **Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> February.**

Well it is almost 2000 hours and I am sitting in Thall mess ante room, one of the most comfortable sitting corner of all messes, a proper standing lamp, a sofa underneath and books on both side, classic in nature, most efficient system for studying and all credit goes to present commandant Colonel Salman, for whom I have developed a great respect. He is graceful in nature, calm and intelligent, I had a good conversation with him an hour ago in his office, I had completed the draft of Thall scouts. I wanted to leave for Parachinar but had to wait till tomorrow, it seems as if I will be missing next week classes also, let's hope. But the charm of frontier is overwhelming. Thall scouts media cell is another classic, very well managed and hi-tech in nature, Havildar Saeed and sepoy Ibrahim are the workforce of it. Today Pakistan is facing Sri Lanka in the Asia Cup match at Bangladesh, Pakistan under 19 time has already qualified for the final.

### **Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014.**

1600 hours, Chinar I, Guest room, Parachinar. Well I have finally reached here, it is cold, the field elevation of the mess is 5750 feet, there is no electricity, as per the attendant, an Afridi Amin kuki Khel, it comes only for an hour rest the generator supplies from 1800-2300 hours, same as in Tochi Valley. My room is grand , new construction, wooden side bars, double bed{of no use} attached changing room and washroom, it is fifty yards away from the main structure. I had a round of the mess, no doubt it is historic in nature, well kept, a series of rooms, an ante room, a billiard room, a bar with empty scotch bottles namely Jhonnie Walker, Teacher, few glasses brandishing Vat 69, a library with instruction snot to take away any book, walls are adorned with pictures, paintings most notable being two sketches by late Guljee, silver of last century, wooden floor on which I almost slipped, the skin of python; as far as I recall it was written that it was killed in Parachinar but now it says that it was killed by an officer in former East Pakistan. Had the lunch , like all other Frontier Corps messes they do not cook lunch , thus I had two kebabs and an omelette with a paratha, too oily and almost made me sick by the smell of the egg, rusty tea , but it is all what they had. These FC messes are good in making meat only and that too of mutton on

charcoal, other than that it is very ordinary in taste. Within the mess, the pictures are quite historic, Sikander Mirza, the very first governor general of Pakistan, Field Marshall Ayub Khan in hunting gear, Zulfiqar Bhutto addressing a public gathering, he is standing in a crowd with natives rubbing shoulders with him so different from present day security environs. General Kayani, Ghulam Ishaq Khan President of Pakistan. In the old, the Lord Minto and Lady Minto, this picture catches my fancy because the caption under it is 'Lady Minto at Parachinar 1910, she is standing under an aircraft wing. I don't think that air service was in use in 1910, had to check it up. Library is small, no match to Chitral or Tochi, neither the books on area are available, the autobiography of Ross Keppel is not here and neither is my book on Tochi Scouts. Yet there are leather bound volumes which are rare and historic in nature. Heating arrangements are mostly based upon wood burning and every room have one of the sigri, even my guest room have one.

In the morning, I was at Thall Mess, rather let me go back to last night events, I got two calls, one from Lt Col Abid who is elder brother or brother in law of Omar in Kot Khizri, he complimented me on my book, other was from my platoon mate Javed 'Jeidi' which were nothing more than abuses, {this is how course mates talk}; I had cut a joke won him through another platoon mate Major General Mussarat and it was his reply to that. I have been working late, slept at 0100 hours, typing and typing the additional information I gathered through the War Diaries and other documents. I woke up with the wake up call of the rooster and then dozed off again, I was up by quarter to nine, had the morning tea and then again typed for an hour before I packed my things. Packing is still an enigma and dilemma despite all these years. Walked to the office area, I am adopting the backyard track, avoiding the Quarterguard, for the reason that they salute, which looks good to ear and soul but I am not authorised thus I avoid it in front. Adjutant was having a small Jirga with local thus I left the message and came back to the mess, had my breakfast and then the wing commander of Kurram arrived, not very impressive in first sight. I went to bid farewell to the adjutant and also to pay the mess bill but he flatly refused to take it.

I sat with Lieutenant Colonel Adil, he is from 36 Frontier Force which was commanded by my platoon mate Brigadier Safdar, I also came to know that Adil is a sitara-i-jurat of Kargil and this changed my perspective about him, he is a war hero and as such I now see him in high esteem. Road is fantastic with beautiful scenery on both sides, the Afghan border runs quite close, in the vehicle, Adil had jammers, radar detectors, weapons and so on, he briefed me about the area which unfortunately was not much of use but luckily he had been leading the operations thus I look forward to having useful interaction with him. Valley is broad, with Kurram river running almost within a shot range. At Arawali, which is another old fort and was under use of Thall Scouts also in 1997-98, fort had adjoining airstrip but the parking of aircraft is inside the fort. This fort is also similar to Thall Fort both in size and importance. Later I shifted to another vehicle which was under use of Lieutenant Colonel Javed who is also commanding a wing and his parent regiment is 38 Cavalry which was commanded by Colonel Wajahat Hamdani, Javed's elder brother had died in the PIA Fokker crash at Multan in 2006. A fine officer and I enjoyed the conversation with him, soon light drizzling started, scenery was eye catching, low clouds on far low hills, smooth road, green fields, neither there are any sharp bends on this segment nor much of traffic.

It is 1700 hours, I had another cup of tea, my fingers are getting numb due to cold and I have kept the door open to get some light, there are only two officers living in the mess, one is doctor who is also doing mess secretary and other is a subaltern Jawad, whom I just shook hand and then he has vanished,

there is a Afghan hound also, probably a pet of an officer, black in colour and generally enjoying the life. Like other messes , here too are peacocks and other birds which I have not met so far , the pigeons are of grey colour and very fat, I don't think they can fly much far off with their present weight, the dog has just barked , a very short burst, which is neither of anger nor of love just a reminder of his presence. I just broke the sitting chair, it has collapsed not due to my weight but due to poor craftsmanship. The coming hours are dreadful, I have to do something to pass the time, one option is just to lie down on bed under a quilt other I cannot think of right now but I have to close the door now.

2130 hours. Well lights are on , so is heater, it is a new kind of heater like a pedestal fan with very bright orange light, I also had the wood burning in the fire place thus temperature is fine, I was going through the provincial gazetteer to find more about the Kurram and Parachinar which are invariably link with the names like Turi and Bangash. But the most amazing thing occurred for which I have no explanation, I was sitting rather lying in the bed under quilt, the Kuki Khel came and ask me for dinner which I had told him an hour ago to get the mix vegetables cook, he came with the tray and there was another person with him of middle age, I thought he is another waiter but I shook hand with him and ask his name, he mentioned Marker Zahid, I inquisitively ask him why this prefix of marker and he said he is the tennis marker and also for squash; ' I just heard your name and came to see, in 1985 there was an officer by the name of Aamir who used to come here, his regiment was deployed ahead of Parachinar' he replied. I was stunned, is he talking about me or was there another officer by the name of Aamir here in 1985, well I was here but I do not exactly recall whether I played squash here, I might have but his coming to the room was amazing, I offered him chair and also tea , I did not said that I am not that officer , rather I had conversation with him. His father also served as marker here in the mess for well over 52 years and only died in 1996, he himself has been reenrolled and is living in a house next to mess, his other brother is also serving in the mess as cook for well over forty years. I enquired about his qaum and he turns out to be a Turi. We talked about that era, I narrated him the incident when the two Mi-35 came and strafed Parachinar and he was also getting nostalgic about the past. I ask him to narrate me the oral history of his tribe .

He narrated that '*Turi are Turk{correct , same is written in gazetteer} and came from far off place, Hazrat Ali{moula Ali} infact sent us to come here, {nothing strange as Ali Masjid in Khyber have similar history}. The people came here on horses and had a camp not far from Parachinar, they send their horses for grazing but local did not cooperate, later natives misbehaved with the women of the camp who went to fetch the water and this is how the war or fight started, initially the natives were strong thus our forefathers used a long route via Kharlachi to attack the village and were successful, with passage of time we captured the valley'*

I was impressed, because similar story I was reading in the book as well, he then narrated how his father used to paly with General Zia as caddie in golf and how he went to meet Zia at Rawalpindi, he was unable to meet him but Zia later sent him Rupees 5000/ which was a handsome amount in 1979, Zia had just imposed the martial law and was busy otherwise he would have met him. I was curious about Para-Chamkani qaum, and he updated me that these were living in hills and were enrolled by British but soon they deserted with weapons and as such British banned their enrolment in militia, now one platoon is recently enrolled in Kurram and other in Thall Scouts. He further said that when Bhutto came here, he was a kid but he remembers that Bhutto walked out of this gate,{pointing towards the gate outside} , I was sitting on the wall and waved him, he replied and his helicopter of white colour was parked there

{yes Bhutto had a VIP Puma in white colour known as white elephant in army aviation}. I was dazed with the chain of events so far and we embrace each other and bid good night with a promise to meet next day. Waiter who came to collect the dinner was different, he said he is Ranizai , I was bit puzzled and he updated me that this tribe lives in Dir or Malakand, there are two platoons of them in Kurram Militia and he himself is in mess as waiter for last eighteen years.

History so far which I have read is fascinating, there is no authentic account but al point to the importance of Parachinar or Sadda as the seat of Karmin province which was established under Ghor Dynasty and remained as their stronghold for a century. Mongols and Turks came through this area, Humayun the Mughul emperor used this route for his invasion of India. Fact is that people and civilisation move and prosper along the water channels especially the movement is always downward, Kurram river takes birth just forty miles inside Afghanistan in Khost province and there fore all the invaders or caravans coming from Persia or Ghazna adopted this path, it is green as I saw today, fertile too and this lasts till Thall from where the Kurram river takes a south-westerly turn and is join by another river Kaitu which again originates from present day Afghanistan and both then traverse Bannu to join River Indus . Mengal as narrated by the Marker were afghans who were given protection by Turi and later more Mengal came in and this how the tension and unrest started in the valley.